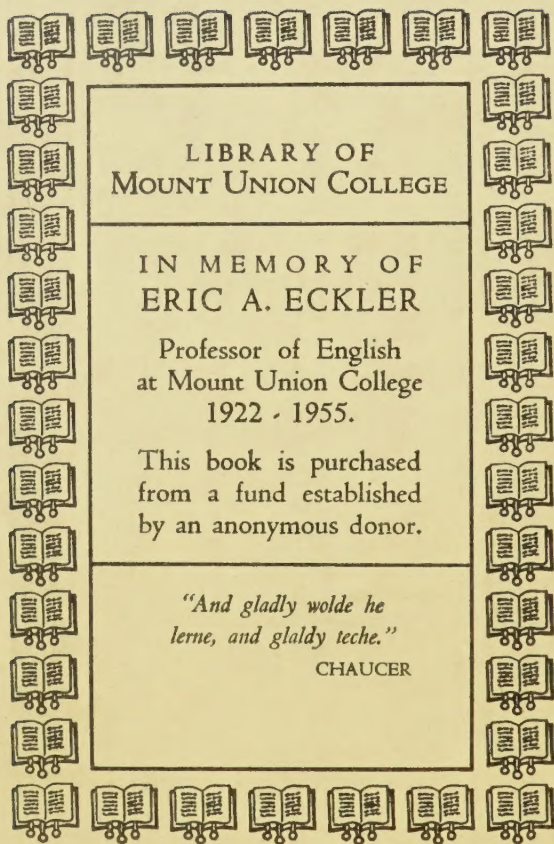




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IN MEMORY OF
ERIC A. ECKLER

Professor of English
at Mount Union College
1922 - 1955.

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*"And gladly wolde he
lerne, and glady teche."*

CHAUCEER

Harvey J. Dodge

EPOCH

Volume One

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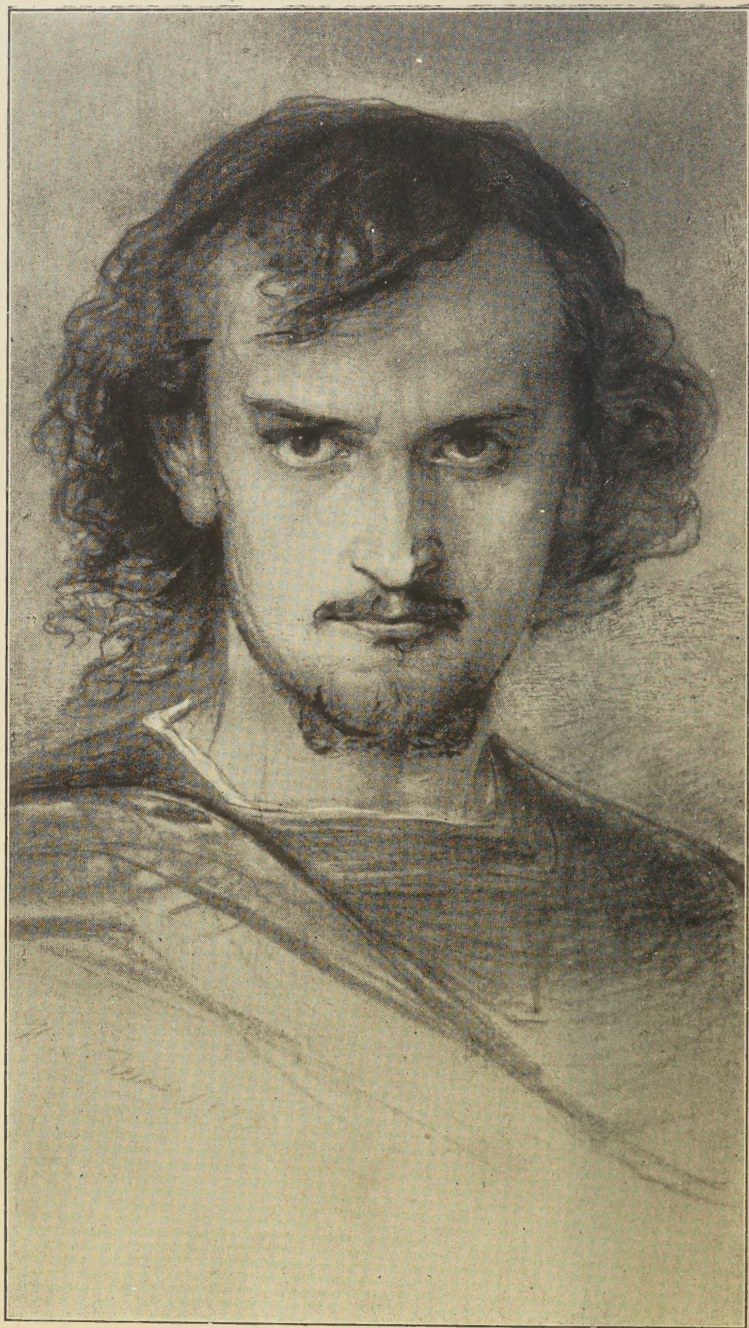
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STEELE MACKAYE, AS *Hamlet*, LONDON, 1873
*From a Crayon Drawing by N. T. Fleuss, F.R.A., owned by the Players,
New York; photograph by Arnold Genthe (page 198.)*



EPOCH

•

The Life of
STEELE MACKAYE
Genius of the Theatre

In Relation to His Times
& Contemporaries

❖

A Memoir by His Son
PERCY MACKAYE

—

❖

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED

In Two Volumes

VOLUME ONE

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BONI & LIVERIGHT : NEW YORK

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ALBANY, N. Y.

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To

MARION MORSE MACKAYE

*my collaborator in this work,
in grateful token of her unstinted zest
for its living motive:
a battling artist's invincible faith
in his dreams.*

THEME



*Out of starry motes
it glimmers—*

MAN :

*Out of an orb of dew
from a highland loch, a lowland burn,
a rockbound sea, an upland river,
it glitters—*

ARTIST :

*Out of expanding lobes
of a mystic seed from the ripened fruit
of an old green bough, in the yearning heart of youth,
it burgeons—*

THEATRE :

*Imaging starry worlds
in an orb of dew on the lash of the eye
of a burning god,
crushing the bitter fruit of a dreamless fen with his heel,
it beacons—*

ONWARD :

PREFACE

A FAR LOOK: "EPOCH": THE HORIZONS OF CONTINUITY

"We are never tired, so long as we can see far enough," wrote Steele MacKaye in one of the note-books of his youth.

In charting this memoir, I have taken a far look across a fascinating landscape, amid which his life-trail emerges out of mystery, glitters radiant and blends again with mystery. To-day is a tiny hollow of that landscape, wherein a lifetime is a little crinkling valley of the illimitable horizons whose majestic contours are etched with mergings of generations, like coalescent shadows of clouds on autumnal mountains.

Such horizons impress their own restorative serenity on their beholder. Looking upon these "we are never tired"; closing our eyes we are sustained inwardly by their larger images, in returning to the lesser grooves of circumstance where needfully our lives are passed. For it is a wholesome economy of natural vision, that the petty can never attain to perspective; as it is a noble paradox of spiritual survival that the only reality which outlasts its date is ephemeral beauty.

This work I have named "Epoch" because, in seeking to reveal some causes and radiating influences of a fecund life-force, it has necessarily had to deal with more than the life-span of an individual. In so doing, it touches upon records of over a hundred years and focuses on about three decades. Through the warp and woof of these years run threads of a biologic theme, which partly hints and reveals its subconscious designs in the Prologue and Epilogue. Between these, the memoir-proper traces the life of a genius from birth to death, through actual records related to the lives and ideals of his contemporaries, amongst whom are many of the outstanding figures of his time.

With respect to such records *Epoch* is concerned with humanistic material of the past. In that sense it is history, and presents its own varied contribution to the knowledge and interpretation of our cultural background, theatrical and non-theatrical. In as much, however, as these records reflect the life story of an artist-

pioneer, who, in his day was constantly hailed as "belonging to the next century," *Epoch* is concerned with humanistic materials of the present and future. As such it is biography, and contributes to the knowledge and interpretation of a dynamic personality, whose still living ideals are peculiarly kindred to those of forward-visioning leaders in our own time.

For that reason, though I hope it may serve to revive responsive memories in readers who may look fondly backward to days endeared perhaps to their own youth, yet I have written *Epoch* chiefly in the hope that it may serve those young spirits (unaging, whatever their birth-dates) who are looking *forward* to creating a nobler future, clearly conceived by that "far look" which renders all who share it—contemporaries.

SOURCES, RECORD AND GOAL; THE IMPRESS OF GENIUS

The sources of my material I have cited in a Note, heading the Appendix at the end of Volume Two. Since the records of my father's career, abounding with creative works and emanating public influences throughout many years, have been nowhere collected or made available in published form,* the nature of my undertaking has involved a triple requirement: while narrating my father's biography (discovering and untangling, for the first time, its precise chronological sequence), at once to present its records in epitome, and to illumine its sources and goal. This I have sought to accomplish by so selecting, condensing and co-ordinating the actual records as to let them speak for themselves—out of the unfolding human story. As my father's biographer, I have fortunately had the privilege of living, during my youth, in close companionship with him in his work and thoughts, with the last work of his life having been his collaborator. In the spirit of that knowledge, I have endeavoured to search within and behind the accidents of surviving material, to reveal the essential and true. Always exceedingly characteristic of his own personality and work were his relations with his fellow workers, whose statements regarding him and his work—both during his lifetime and after—I have quoted, as far as practicable, without deletion. Taken together, they comprise an extraordinary consensus of spontaneous

* During his lifetime Steele MacKaye published no book. Of thirty dramatic works by him, only two have been published since his death (Cf. Bibliography Note at back of Volume Two). Of contemporary comments and records concerning his plays, lectures, inventions, acting, teaching, theatre-building, etc., no digest has ever been made till that which is now presented in the contents of *Epoch*.

tribute to his permanent significance as a man and artist. Here are a few brief sentences concerning him:

"His spirit is the best in the American theatre."—*Gordon Craig*.

"Steele MacKaye, super-friend—a marvelous and indescribable genius."—*William Gillette*.

"A personality who swept the rock of Gibraltar away."—*David Belasco*.

"The most potent constructive mind of his time."—*Francis Wilson*.

"In his chosen field, that rare figure—a captain."—*Augustus Thomas*.

"You and I can conquer the world. Why not? Let us do it."—*Oscar Wilde*.

"Steele MacKaye's genius was unspoiled by theatricalisms."—*Edwin Booth*.

"MacKaye has thrown floods of light into my mind . . . a deeper insight into the philosophy of my own art than I had myself learned in fifty years of study."—*Edwin Forrest*.

"One of the most original of men . . . a brilliant imagination and great energy."—*Thomas A. Edison*.

"Steele MacKaye was called to regenerate art in the world."—*François Delsarte*.

"I have never seen a *Hamlet* that equalled MacKaye's."—*Joseph Severn* (artist friend of Keats).

Scattered through records of *Epoch*, the many other such estimates are too voluminous to quote in a preface; but reference to their varied expressions may be had through the index (under Steele MacKaye), the table of contents, and a list of Commentators at the front of Volume Two.

In view of those sincere statements by persons qualified to make them, as in view of the total record of these two volumes, the reader will understand why I have used on the title-page a term too often superficially blazoned in print, but rightfully used only under rare and valid tests of reality—the designation *genius*, which in the case of Steele MacKaye inevitably followed his living spirit as its flame-like shadow, from childhood till death—and memory.*

NEW DATA OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

The mysterious elements of that flame—their whence and whither—are motives of inheritance that imbue the Prologue and Epilogue. The life of my father necessarily involves the highly significant life of *his* father, Colonel James MacKaye, whom the editor of the New York World, in summing up his career (p. i, 101), designated as "one of the heroic figures of his age." On his

* Cf. ii, 17, 24-25.

death in 1888, in his eighty-third year, the unfortunate loss of his two-volumed autobiography in manuscript (descriptive of statesmen, artists, national leaders, his associates prior to, and during, the Civil War) left a hiatus of record which I have sought (inadequately, but as best I might) to fill, in part, by a few results of personal research—including a new “lost” portrait of President Lincoln—bearing upon my grandfather’s important relations with Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation. Concerning these Miss Ida M. Tarbell has recently expressed her warmly sympathetic interest, and has kindly contributed to this memoir a statement of her own (in part published in the *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 1927), which is included in the Appendix (with reference to page i, 108).

My sketch of my grandfather’s career, as “a footnote to American History” is but one of a number of analogous notes—by-products of my central theme—contributing data, here published for the first time, throwing occasional new light on phases and significant figures of our background in the arts and letters. Of such, for instance, is the brilliant, too brief career of my uncle, James K. Medbery, in his literary friendships with Mark Twain and Henry M. Alden, during their early days; as another, of later date, glimpses some early cronies of my old friend, E. A. Robinson, before the dawn-break of his permanent fame. Still others, newly glimpsing Emerson, Inness, Winslow Homer, etc., the reader will happen upon by himself. In my father’s own career, records of an entirely new chapter in literary-dramatic history will be found in Chapter XV, concerning Oscar Wilde and “the dream theatre.” Indeed, fully nine-tenths of these two volumes comprise new material which has not been presented before to the general reader.

A LONG VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY: TWO LIFE-FRIENDS

Most of such notes are of jotted images, gleaned as from dim ocean-isles, touched at on the long voyage of discovery which has comprised this writing of *Epoch*. Far back in my boyhood I first went aboard, and stowed away my first pages of cargo, on a brief dock-visit of search. More than twenty years ago, I first set sail, along with my wife as co-mariner, on a scattered series of trial-trips. Since then, the log of our adventures could conjure many a deep-sea chantey of “rounding the Horn”; and now, but for her hand on the wheel and her heart in the hold, during these last four years of headlong cruising, it is a hundred to one we should never

have put into port; and so I have written her name clear on the prow, in dedication,—resilient comrade of all my light and dark.

At times, a poignant association of this memoir has been the passing of many among those who have themselves contributed much of significant import to the total record: friends and associates of my father deeply interested in its completion: more than all, and most intimately the partner of his life-work, my mother,—who lived to see and approve the large outlines of my book, before her death, in 1924, and whose written statements, furnished me long before then, are quoted in almost every chapter. To offer her, in lifetime tribute, the final outcome, had been one of my keenest incentives from the beginning. Though that now is impossible, the completed memoir itself reveals her own deeply sentient spirit inseparably linked with my father's in the campaigns of his dreams, as in after days she shared in those of their children and their children's children.

My father's living portrait, in all its elusive lights and shades of contrast, may only, I think, be limned at full length by the gradual self-revealings of his whole record, as these gradually unfold themselves to the imagining reader. For this, his record must speak—and live—of itself, and not by another's epitome.

WHOLENESS OF VISION; FAITH; THE DA VINCI IDEAL

None the less perhaps one pervasive meaning of his many-sided nature may be clarified, from the start, by a rapid survey of its major elements: capacities which grew toward sure co-ordination from their central motive of growth—the will to freedom of *all* faculties, through harmonious expression: in brief, the Da Vinci ideal of life and art.* Concerning that inclusive ideal he once wrote to me (p. ii, 434):

“The moment *the Spirit of the Part* separates itself from *the Whole*, in purpose, or desire, then discord is the result; then error, illusion, lust, everything vicious, spiritually speaking, is the result.”

Wholeness of vision was thus his aim. Toward that instinctive goal Steele MacKaye lived by affirmation, faith, “imperial self-confidence.” He denied only one thing—inhibition of his inward growth. Its outward expression in art thus became dynamic, plastic—reaching out for the art of the theatre “in the round”: an evolving organic art, all alive—not to be pigeonholed. And since art for

* Cf., on page ii, 436, his “Credo of Victory,” comprising “a determination to develop *all faculties*.” Cf. also, “Of the Use of Man,” p. i, 125; and i, 397.

him was inseparable from life, so he himself, the individual, refused to become a peg in any static system. In making this refusal for the sake of the creative future, he was none the less deeply sentient to his continuity with the living past, which is the fecundity of all great art. But as an artist revolutionary he would begin by opening all pigeonholes and releasing all imprisoned carriers of the creative spirit. In this aim he was keenly responsive, in youth, to the kindred ideal of his French master, Delsarte, who once wrote to him (cf. p. i, 145):

"The sciences and the arts are one, however they may be differentiated through specialties. There is no place assignable in any Academy to a *savant*, or to an artist. As an Academician once said to me: 'Amongst us every one is pigeonholed. We have round holes, square holes, oblong holes, etc.—and each of us fits his hole.' *But there is no hole for a man like you.*"

From his early boyhood, Steele MacKaye chose to build a watch-tower, not to dig a safety-vault, for his mind's habitat. To the youth of our time, increasingly menaced by mechanised specialisations of the spirit which cut off their continuity of growth and vision in segments of sterile living, the story of his life—turbulent, at times tragic, but always spiritually free—carries, I would fondly believe, a special and inspiring message. To live it required imagination, courage, self-faith: To one dear to him he wrote:

"Well, my friend,—it is a lonely way. Few there are who are ready and joyous to travel toward the attainment of the Good, the Beautiful and True" (p. i, 224).—And to another: "Courage is the great conqueror of every virtue. Fear is the mean father of every vice. . . . All my *real* friends will know how to estimate my acts. For the others, I care as little as I do for the buzz of an insect on the mountains of the moon." (i, 183; ii, 271.)

"WAY-SEEKER" AND "WORLD-FINDER"; THE ART OF THE THEATRE

The rewards of such a life, of course, were implied in his choice of it. They were, in great measure, inward. Yet in outward tokens it was also signally distinguished. As a manifestation of the dynamics of genius his personality presented a rarely exemplified blending of the mystic and practical: a psychologic study wherein the fruitions and the freedom of his growth and power escaped, perhaps happily, in that era, the over-analysis and super-self-scrutiny characteristic of these latter days.

It was this freedom of response to the urgencies of an inward light, combined with extraordinary capacity and love for intensely

hard work, which led him on arduous trails as a "way-seeker" for the harmonious embodiment of his varied gifts—to become the "world-finder" of that embodiment in the wonderful synthesis of the theatre's art. How, with uncompromising sincerity, he sought out, tested and mastered the many-vocationed functions of that synthetic art, ever seeking their creative expansion for social betterment under ever-increasing tremendous obstacles of circumstance—always for the goal of beauty, is the story of "Epoch": a true story, which unrolls behind its many scenes, its casts of real *dramatis personæ*—his historic comrades or adversaries in arms, through tortuous campaigns of the Theatre—that bewildered Titan of the Arts, perennially spider-webbed by the Liliputian ideals of commercialism.

In view of this synthetic motive of his career, we may perhaps clarify in advance a few of its realisations by citing in survey some actual records of theatrical history.

A SURVEY OF RECORD: "OPENING THE DOOR" IN 1871

What Steele MacKaye first brought to the theatre of Broadway—forces of inheritance and upbringing, of art, international outlook and social ferment, new and startling to those local stage-horizons—has been suggested on pages 153-156 of this volume, and is thus touched upon by the sprightly pen of Nym Crinkle (p. 165):

"Fancy this heavily surcharged young man, palpitating with enthusiasm, girded by influential friends, gifted with a convincing utterance, lighting in New York, and finding no door open for the admission of his great thoughts but the door of the theatre.—Remember, at that time Lester Wallack was the local favorite, whose greatest work was *Rosendale*; Montague was the young Apollo of the period, Charles Thorne was the Roscius, Dion Boucicault was the Lope da Vega. Perhaps it is not strictly correct to say the door of the theatre was open. Young MacKaye's purpose was to force it. . . . He would become a playwright, a histrionic exemplar of the truth."

He then became a playwright and in after years, designer and manager of five theatres (in New York and Chicago), he was author of some thirty plays, in twenty-two productions of which, directed by himself, chiefly in his own theatres, he enacted seventeen rôles (as charted at the front of Volume Two). Of these, all but two productions were successful, and one of his plays, performed during two generations by scores of companies, is perhaps the most-times-acted play ever written. Considered, then in re-

spect to his special achievements as an American dramatist, Steele MacKaye will always hold a permanent place in history as one of a small group whose focalised activities as playwrights—being centred, in the early 'Seventies, upon two or three theatres on Broadway—initiated there the uninterrupted continuity of indigenous American drama. Referring to a time ten years later, Augustus Thomas has recently written (p. ii, 105):

“Our American dramatists increase and multiply. When I first came to New York, who were they? *Steele MacKaye and three or four others.*”

That was in the 'Eighties. Dating back to a decade earlier, the outstanding leaders of the little band, who began the continuity of our native output in drama, were undoubtedly two among three: Howard, MacKaye, Daly.* Of those three, Daly—though slightly earlier upon the field, was more concerned as manager of his own theatre, in developing his extraordinary facility for foreign adaptations than in creating a repertory of American drama. If, then, we would seek in time the fountain-head of our present ever-deepening current of native dramaturgy between the banks of Broadway, we shall find it, I believe, springing from a certain ten-weeks (Dec. 21, 1870—March 13, 1871), wherein commenced the public careers of Bronson Howard and Steele MacKaye, both born in the same six months of 1842, on the shores of Lake Erie, of old American lineage. The friendly relationship in work between those two pioneer leaders is traced further in the pages of *Epoch*.

Theirs metaphorically, was the earliest permanent settlement of the shores of Broadway, on the part of indigenous dramatists, raising there the banner of an avowed claim to native sovereignty (still overwhelmingly disputed by varied tribal tongues!). Of course, for nearly a century before then, there had occurred sporadic productions of plays by native Americans, including those of Tyler, Dunlap, Willis, Boker and others. But such were comparable to the exploring voyages and ephemeral visits of the Cabots and Captain John Smith in advance of the first permanent settlement on the shores of Massachusetts Bay. For our American theatrical metaphor—those settlements have their counterparts on Broadway in the first produced plays of Bronson Howard and Steele MacKaye

* Boucicault, amazingly versatile in his output, was in no sense indigenous and must be accounted essentially an Irish-American product. Wallack, though occasionally a playwright, was an outstanding leader rather as an actor-producer of others' plays than as an American dramatist.

—*Saratoga* (laid at its title place) and *Marriage* (laid in MacKaye's boyhood home, at Newport)—in the early 'Seventies.

"WHITMAN AND CUSTER": ACTOR-DRAMATIST-PRODUCER

"Like Walt Whitman and Custer," wrote in 1888 a New York dramatic critic (p. ii, 162), "Steele MacKaye in his work has broad lines and bold dash. He has a large vibration, both in literature and speech—an elemental strength and creative power, wherein his work is unlike all other work now being done for the stage here. His work has a lusty blare that is not of our hour."—And Mr. J. Ranken Towse, one of whose contemporary comments is quoted on page ii, 151, has lately written, out of ripe retrospect of his more than half century service as critic of the New York Evening Post, a valued estimate of my father's work, quoted in the Appendix. (Reference to same page.)

If Steele MacKaye, then, had been nothing else than one of the most successful and fecund of American dramatists (cf. pp. ii, 223, 229), his career would hold its lasting place in the pioneering history here cited. But he was, in simple truth, so very much more than that, with respect also to significances past, present and prophetic, that these may best be suggested by glancing further at their correlation in his public career.

As actor, a decade of intensive study on his part bore fruit, with apparent suddenness of dazzling acclaim, in his performances of *Hamlet* in London, the first American to enact it there—followed, through after years, by the creative results of that experience in his works as actor-producer of his own plays.

"When Becker, the actor, refused to take the part of a trooper in *Wallenstein*," said Goethe to Eckermann, "I gave him warning that, if he would not play the part, I would play it myself. That did the business; for they knew me at the theatre well enough, that I would have played it, and would have eclipsed Herr Becker, too, for I knew the part better than he did."

Steele MacKaye had no Weimar Theatre at his disposal, but this quoted attitude of Goethe as stage-director is strikingly similar to that of my father in the conduct of his theatrical companies. From similar motives in one of his plays, *Hazel Kirke*, he acted five parts, minor and principal. As producer, these records reveal his work as favourably compared with the best attainments in kind on the part of his cordial fellow worker and friend, Sir Henry Irving, and of the famous Meiningen Players of Germany, as well as creator, in about a hundred original inventions, of revolutionary de-

velopments in the theatre's art achieved by no other producer of his century, and profoundly affecting the era following his own.

ÆSTHETIC PHILOSOPHY; SCHOOLS; A NEW KIND OF EDUCATOR

As æsthetic philosopher, exemplar of some thousands of special studies in "harmonic gymnastics" and "gamuts" based in natural laws observed, classified and expounded by him from his early youth till his death, his special contributions earned this comment from a contemporary, in 1885 (cf. p. ii, 60):

"What Steele MacKaye is doing for the art of expression is like what Herbert Spencer did for the art of composition in his essay on 'The Philosophy of Style.' It places the art on a philosophical basis."

In connection with this phase of his work, in study and teaching, his important relations with François Delsarte, whose foremost disciple he was, are in these pages for the first time given their just historic record. At this late date, that record reveals what would once have startled an entire generation of adherents to "Delsartism" and "the Delsarte System," by the true story of how his selfless devotion to an impersonal cause put aside, for half a lifetime, all credit and acclaim for creative discoveries publicly imputed to the dead master whom he adored, and whose name (in the words of Madame Delsarte) he had "rescued from oblivion." These phases are chiefly dealt with in Chapters V and XXVI.

They reveal him as artist-scientist, absorbed in discovering and mastering the varied facets of that "Da Vinci ideal" which imbued all his labours, and presents him, perhaps above all, as *a new type of educator* in the field of democratic culture: one impelled by rapt contemplation to impassioned teaching; for it must not be overlooked, in this rapid survey, that permeating all his technical efficiencies was the overmastering urge toward social service, akin to the religious zeal of his "non-conforming" ancestors. As educator, then, unsparing in self-discipline for impersonal good, but zestful of imparting to all his fellow-beings the personal joy and release of that self-discipline through art, the instrument of beauty; as educator, creative of new agencies for man's freedom, not of moulds for his mechanisation;—as educator, in the ranks of the future, related as deeply to fearless "visionaries" of the past, Steele MacKaye holds a place unclassified as a founder of schools—personal not "institutional" in type.

In this memoir we shall find him arduously founding such schools—of the theatre: for the first time, in his own country. Inspiring him in that aim from the beginning were two among immortal teachers—Emerson and Shakespeare. Of the first he once wrote to his father (p. i, 120):—"I recall what Emerson says: *We acquire the power we overcome.*" Of the second, he wrote in youthful fervour to his friend, Alger (p. i, 147):

"What a godlike genius was Shakespeare's! How one burns to know him personally! Poor tortured fools that we are—afflicted with personality ourselves, we would inflict it upon all things else. . . . Personalities rest upon the bosom of the Impersonal—like spots upon the sun. Our grief and vehemence are merely foils which render us more apparent to such Godlike eyes as are the engulfing calm of the immutable. Forgive me this weak heart of mine—that, craving personal forms of God, is still taught by all things that he is that crushing mystery—the Impersonal itself."

Moved by such personal yearnings toward the impersonal, and self-tutored in the magic of Shakespeare from his boyhood, when he recited "in one breath" the whole of *The Merchant of Venice* to an astounded little playmate (p. i, 81), his young spirit had drunk with equal zest from the stream of Stratford-on-Avon as from Concord River, where it winds under "the rude bridge" not far from Walden Pond.

AGASSIZ AND BOOTH; SOWING REFORMATION; A CIVIC FESTIVAL

In the spirit of those sources, fused with the Gallic genius of the ancient "house of Moliere" and the mystic aspiration of Delsarte, he launched his first Theatre-school venture on the "broad, free and earnest" receptivity of his own country; and it is a notable piece of American history (unchronicled, till now, in literary annals) that leaders of New England and New York cultural life, such as Longfellow, Fields, Agassiz, Hale, Bryant, Booth, Cooper, Wallack, Beecher, and their circles, should have joined for the first time with state and university to offer their auspices for the début of this militant disciple of the theatre's art as the highest form of education.

"If public schools are a benefaction," he declared, "if medical, divinity and music schools are essential to the progress of mankind then dramatic schools should have been established long ago, because no factor in civilisation wields a more powerful influence than the art of the theatre."

More than twenty years later he wrote, just before his death:

"How to make the lofty and the refined popular is an aim which seemed to me worthy the devotion of a lifetime. With the earnest desire of doing my whole artistic duty in this direction, I sought to contribute *all the faculties and forces at my command* to the crystallization of this conception into the concrete form of an established institution." (P. ii, 312.)

"The truth is," wrote indignantly his friend, Wilkie Collins, in MacKaye's behalf (p. ii, 21), "in the theatre we offer no encouragement to reform."

Long earlier, the author of *She Stoops to Conquer* had written *:

"How shall the freeborn Muse bear to submit to those restrictions which avarice or power would impose? It is somewhat unlikely, therefore, that the artist whose labours are valuable, and who knows their value, will turn to the stage for either fame or subsistence."

Steele MacKaye, who also loved "the freeborn Muse," was other-minded. The scent of battle with avarice in power allured him; and, despite the obstacles which confronted his reforming crusades, when in his mid-career the city of his birth celebrated in his honour an unprecedent civic-dramatic festival, an editorial wrote of him (p. ii, 136):

"Unique in theatrical annals, in America, Mr. Steele MacKaye comes as guest of the city. As a dramatist, he has been singularly successful. But Mr. MacKaye is more than a dramatist. In the best sense he is a reformer, of whom it may be stated, without the least exaggeration, that he has done more of practical good for the contemporaneous American theatre than any man in the profession."

In other chapters the reader may follow his single fervid passage in preparing fields of reformation, from which to-day the fecund crops of little theatres and drama leagues are springing by thousands.

INNESS AND EDISON: PAINTING AND INVENTION; "REVOLUTIONARY"

But he was not only an eloquent reformer, stirring crowded lecture-halls to thoughtful enthusiasm; an accomplished actor, serving his nine Muses of Reformation as a fascinating matinée idol. He was likewise a lover of serene nature—a painter of dreamy landscapes and browsing cattle, a disciple of Inness and Troyon, from whom he received high encouragement and praise for his work. He was also a city recluse, inventing in his midnight workshops practical instruments of reform.

* Oliver Goldsmith in *The Theatrical Inquisitor*, October, 1817.

As inventor, the epitome of his inventions, listed at the front of Volume Two, suggests some achievements of those special uses of his faculties. Concerning those, in this memoir, I have quoted several statements by my father's old friend and fellow-inventor, Thomas A. Edison, who has written me from his Orange, N. J. laboratory (Nov. 29, 1926):

"I have very pleasant recollections of your father, Steele MacKaye, who impressed me as being the pioneer inventor of the theatrical world. He was possessed of great imaginative power, together with an abnormal energy, ever seeking new worlds to conquer. It appeared to me then that he was moving among an unappreciative theatrical community. He talked to me about many of his plans, including his Spectatorium for the Chicago World's Fair."

Often and again by his contemporaries, quoted in these pages, MacKaye was described as a "revolutionary." Such he was, but he was one of a rare species; a revolutionary builder not destroyer. His method of progress was to imagine clearly the better vital substitutes for things outworn and then to work indefatigably for their realisation. With him these substitutes comprised a wide scope of theatrical innovations, from slight material conveniences to vast radical reformatations implying, and aiding to create, inner expansions of the theatre's organism itself, social and artistic.

INNOVATIONS; PIONEERING THE MOTION-PICTURE THEATRE

When the playgoer of to-day slips his hat under his theatre-chair; accepts a glass of water from an usher; enjoys unconsciously the indirect lightings of an auditorium or overhead lightings of the stage; breathes there ventilated air, or is saved perhaps from emergency peril by fire-proofed scenery and fire-protection equipment behind the scenes; he takes no thought of Steele MacKaye, the pioneer of these and many other long-established "innovations"; none the less he inherits the results of their inventor's initiative, termed in its time Quixotic and "visionary." (Cf. List of Innovations, at front of Vol. Two.) So of far larger practical imaginings—some long since adopted, others still futuristic—the reader of *Epoch*—especially of Part Six concerned with the Spectatorium—may gather definite data regarding Steele MacKaye's historic and prophetic contributions to the theatre's function in society.

Concerning some phases of these, as they were projected through inventions of his at that time, a recent statement has been made by one of the foremost among the pioneer inventors of the motion-

picture industry, Mr. A. F. Victor, Vice-President of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers. In April, 1927, after examining for the first time many patent-specifications of my father's which I furnished to him, Mr. Victor—who is also an informed historian in that field—has written to me for this memoir a statement, printed in full at the end of Volume Two, from which the following is an excerpt:

"I have greatly enjoyed the task of checking over the patent papers which cover your father's many inventions. To properly place these inventions and to analyze them would require months. It is my intention to go into this matter fully at an early date, and prepare a paper on the subject to be submitted to the Society of Motion Picture Engineers. . . .

"I am greatly impressed by the fact that many of the methods we employ nowadays in motion picture making were originated by your father for use in his Spectatorium. Whether his ideas were remembered and put to use later on, or whether they were rediscovered, it is difficult to state without a certain amount of investigation. . . . It is especially interesting to note that the means employed by Steele MacKaye for the reproduction of atmospheric phenomena, and which were patented by him in 1893, are identical with those now in common practice. . . . The cloud-producing scheme is an example of such priority of conception. . . . I find every indication that the thing which to-day has developed into the most powerful form of public entertainment was in his mind, and that he recognised the appeal of that form of entertainment. . . . Even titles and subtitles had been recognized by him as an essential to proper presentation, and these did not arrive in the picture industry until after many years of exploitation of the pictures themselves."

A NEW WORLD EPIC: ITS "TITANIC DISASTER"

When recently in New York, the latest immense palace of motion pictures, seating six thousand people, was impressively opened as "the largest theatre in the world," I chanced to be reading at the time the printer's proofs of this memoir: that very Part Six, describing a theatre in Chicago, thirty-four years ago, seating *twelve* thousand people, equipped with twenty-five intermoving stages, responsive, for the first time, to the enginery of electricity: a theatre, constructed for producing "a motion picture in the round," interpreting a New World epic, by successive companies of twelve hundred actors, drilled by experts in a civic school of pantomime, dance and folk-arts; for a production, visually revealed by revolutionary lighting, musically—by a "New World Symphony" and triple community-choirs; a theatre dedicated not to commercial ends, but to creative education through art in a permanent municipal institution;—and while reading my printer's proofs,

I was struck anew by thoughts of what the *MacKaye Spectatorium* might have contributed to the renaissance of a new world culture in democracy, if the panic of 'Ninety-three had not stunned the nation by an iceberg of fear, which sunk a "Titanic" of Art, in those years before the advent of the Federal Reserve System.

The details of that earlier "Titanic disaster," here first recorded for their perennial meanings, are of vital moment still to all bold navigators—increasing throughout our time—who are daring to launch and pilot the caravels of a nobler civilisation amid the still treacherous icefloes of theatrical speculation. To these especially I would dedicate the last Part of my father's life-story, for that "Vision of Columbus" is theirs in common.

YOUTH PERENNIAL: TO THE GOAL—GODSPEED!

Obscure or noted, they are of course far too many for my personal knowledge to name in greeting, yet none the less I am sure that the spirit of tenacious faith which is Steele MacKaye greets them with Godspeed from the world-arc of a past that spans the future, under which to-day, you—anonymous reader—will not perhaps deny your own good share in the dreams of those navigators.

Such dreamers are of no one age, or epoch. They are themselves youth perennial. The mechanical clock that ticks us all off scene cannot catch the rhythm of their heartbeats. Yet art—and prefaces—are so long; our "lives"—so brief: how shall we snatch time to tell one another our dreams? Even while completing this book, I have just reached my father's life-span. Had he lived till now, he would just have passed his father's. To-day he might still have been in zest of the battle, had he not died in his prime for its cause. Yet for that—"the willingness is all," and the cause itself is undying.

For that cause, then, *the Theatre*, purged of unreason, plastic to beauty creative, he is here still, in his prime, to re-live his story: here to voice again through me, his hand on my pen—reweaving scattered threads of Before and After—whatever of mystic travail, hope, imagining, defeat and victory quickened the will of his captaincy through the strange lights and darks of his mind's campaigns: here to clarify these—and to rebuild their meanings in the truth of record.

And so, through me, he begins the research of his story, surveys it, stirring half-conscious, in the shadow of an epoch; and wonders in his quest: eager, alert in revery, a dreamer—militant.

OUTLINE OF EPOCH

VOLUME ONE: *The Way-Seeker*

Prologue—Ancestry

PART I—"A Radical Fool"

PART II—"Won at Last"

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NOTE OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the many years, at separate periods (in particular, the last four years continuously), during which the author of *Epoch* has been engaged in preparing and writing this biography, he has been privileged to receive very many friendly courtesies from those whose kind offices have been helpful to the course of his work. These courtesies indeed have been so numerous and varied (in reference both to text and illustrations) and the nature of the work itself has enlisted, without exception, a heartiness of personal response so interested and ample, that the biographer is frankly at a loss how to enumerate his acknowledgments, or to express adequately his deeply felt appreciation.

Sincerely, then, as he would desire to do so, he has found it impracticable to list by name the many who have shown him such kindnesses, though most of them are gratefully mentioned elsewhere throughout this memoir. To one, for instance,—a distinguished international writer—who has rendered great assistance by the laborious task of indexing these two volumes, the author has made his acknowledgment at the head of the Index, in Volume Two. In the Index itself, the sub-headings under Steele MacKaye comprise a representative list of outstanding features in my father's career.

Here, though this note is necessarily impersonal, the biographer wishes to convey the sense of his true thanks to individual persons, for various gracious services, rendered to him through the following groups and institutions—especially by the directorates and staffs of their libraries: in New York City, the Players, the Harvard Club, the Century Club, the National Arts Club, the National Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the New York Public Library; in other cities, Harvard University, Yale University, Miami University, Dartmouth College.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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NOTE: The illustrations of *Epoch* comprise original designs and photographs, reproduced partly on separate half-tone plates, and partly as drawings in the text.

The designs, never till now published, include paintings, etchings, and drawings by *George Inness, Gordon Craig, Jules Guerin, Child Hassam, Joseph Jefferson, Norman Bel Geddes, Robert Edmond Jones,* Hughson Hawley, Steele MacKaye, his son William Payson MacKaye, and his grandchildren, Keith and Arvia MacKaye.* Portraits by Bass Otis, Frank B. Carpenter, Gordon Stevenson, N. T. Fleuss (photographed by Arnold Genthe); and line drawings of Steele MacKaye's inventions. Of the foregoing illustrations, the architectural and scenic pictures are based on designs and conceptions of Steele MacKaye.

The photographs (most of which have not been published before) represent the result of extensive research in securing rare examples of their kind, in great measure contemporaneous with the text and personally associated with their originals.†

As a whole, the illustrations comprise a collection—chronological in sequence and distinctive of the cultural leadership of the times—which constitute a visual commentary on the sources, growth and influence of an artist's career.

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* The drawings by Robert Edmond Jones, in reconstruction of the Spectatorium, were published in *The Theatre Arts Magazine*, April, 1923, as illustrations of Percy MacKaye's article, "The Theatre of Ten Thousand."

† For special helpful favours, in respect to the photographs, the author is indebted to Roy Day (of the Players), Gerry Parker Floyd, Doris Ulmann, and the Levesque and Sleeper Studios. He also expresses his sincere thanks to Henry James, Eugene O'Neill, Edwin Booth Grossman, Frank and Shirley Lawton, Henry Wilder Foote, Edith Barrett, Alma Peterson, Caroline Bliss, Mrs. Walter Damrosch, Mrs. Fiske, Mrs. Henry Villard, Mrs. J. Q. A. Ward.

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VOLUME ONE
The Way-Seeker



*"Well, my friend, it is a lonely way . . .
toward the attainment of the Good, the
Beautiful and True."*

STEELE MACKAYE (p. i, 224.)

PROLOGUE

Ancestry



So runs the old, grim clan legend of a racial will to victory, atavistic of him who is the subject of this memoir—Steele MacKaye. At the end of *his* race with turbulent mystic powers, from imminent defeat he wrested victory by self-maiming resourcefulness, hurling his gauntlet, and—beyond his life-span—touching *his* spirit's goal: the conquest of an enchanted isle, for after-generations to inherit.

THE SEER OF RHINNS—THE BOOK AND THE PURSE

But the conquest of that goal was to be sought not only *manu forti*, "with the strong hand" of fortitude in battling the turbulent fates of his own nature. Serener powers of inheritance, highly sensitised functions, were to assuage and transfigure the conflict. To the aid of Will rose Imagination.

From age-long broodings in Scotch mist, shut inward by the elements to peer *within* for "light that never was on land or sea," the ancestral *MacAoidh* had developed that "second sight" with which, from time to time, he gifted the seers of his race in sundry parts of the world. So once, it is related, among the MacKays of Islay his spirit visited in sleep *MacAoidh na Ranna*, "the Seer of Rhinns." The legend of this MacKay is so apt to our theme that I will quote an excerpt here from the published statement of "Fionn" in *The Celtic Monthly*:

"MacKay of Rhinns was gifted with prophetic vision. In the churchyard in Isle Oarsay are said to rest the mortal remains of the seer. It is said that many of his predictions were written down, and the manuscript was believed to be at one time at Innisowen in Ireland. Although the document seems to be lost, search should still be made for it. It was a foolscap bound book, containing *MacAoidh's* prophecies.

"According to my informant, the seer received his gifts in a peculiar manner. While waiting at Portnahaven for a favourable wind to carry him to Erin, he fell asleep. When he awoke he found a book, of parchment, under his head. The book was full of wisdom and pre-science and endowed its owner with wonderful powers of foresight. Along with the book he also received a silk purse full of gold. On the book were written the words—'*Caillear thusa ach cha chaillear mise*'—('You may be lost, but not I'); while on the purse was inscribed the following legend, in letters of gold:—'*Cho fada 'sa thairneas tu asam bheir me dhuit, ach ma thilleas tu bonn orm, sguridh mi*'—('As long as you draw out of me I will let you have, but if you return a coin I cease to yield').

"A favourable wind blew, and the seer was carried over to Ireland. For many years, and in many straits, the purse proved useful, but on one occasion he forgot the legend and returned a coin, and from that time the purse lost its charm. On one of his visits, MacKay left his

book with a family in Derry, and on his return journey he encountered a storm, when he and his crew were lost. Concerning this final visit a descendant of the family reports:—"The last time he was here he was short of cash, and my predecessor advanced some; and the seer left the book as an acknowledgment."

Steele MacKaye may never have heard of MacKay of Rhinns, but we may follow through this memoir some moving and sardonic analogues of the seer's forecastings. In the final storm which engulfed him, he was equally assured that though he himself might be lost, his vision could not. And though we shall never find him returning a coin to the immaterial purse from which he ceaselessly drew, we shall as surely find him materially "short of cash" and, at the last, leaving his book of revelations "as an acknowledgment."

Since his death, indeed, that visionary "book" itself has, at times, seemed to be lost irretrievably, the glowing pages scattered in darkness; yet it is now with the good hope of gathering some of them back, to hand on some glimpses of the radiant personality stamped there, that this memoir is written.

THE MAN I' THE MUNE—THREE HA'PENNIES AND A FARTHING

It must not, however, be intimated here that the immemorial *MacAoidh* consorts only with Norns of Tragedy on the misty heath. Not so. Sly pixies also twitch his plaidie and surround him with eerie laughter. On the edge of evening, where the full moon silhouettes him seated on his crag, head tilted back to gaze at his fellow shadowed there in the bright circle, he holds in his hand—not a dagger now, but four little copper coins, jingling them dreamily. And his cheeks are crinkled in a whimsical pucker, while the pixies chirrup this ancient ditty of their orchard glens:

*"As I gaed up the apple-tree,
A' the apples fell on me.
Bake a puddin', bake a pie,
Send it up to John MacKay.
John MacKay is no in,
Send it up to the Man i' the Mune:
The Man i' the Mune's mendin' his shoon—
Three bawbees and a farden in."*

The last cryptic line would seem to require a philologist and the whole a soothsayer. So, after some pains of research in pixy lore, the present chronicler has been no little interested to discover in the above rhymed cryptogram a form of "other-worldly" contract,

which—"being interpreted" in English from the original pixy Gaelic,—“readeth as follows”:

“WHEREAS an auspicious windfall of the fruits of Hesperides having descended in golden showers on X, the party of the first part, (e.g. ‘*A’ the apples fell on me*’), and said crop having been duly converted by recipe to merchandisable commodities, the same having been despatched aloft to the author of said windfall and recipe, one John MacKay, party of the second part, for him to test in the laboratory of his Ivory Tower, and receive due remuneration for all rights in said recipe and golden windfall,—

“And WHEREAS the said MacKay was found to have removed his stated place of business to the unstatutory precincts of the Moon, where he was duly identified as none other than *The Man i’ the Mune* himself, and was there discovered in the act of cobbling footgear for his own dreams, in no wise contracted for by the party of the first part,—

“NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing unprecedented occurrences, it is hereby agreed by both parties hereto that the remuneration above referred to shall consist of *three Scotch ha’pennies and a farthing*.”

To this document in Gaelic the rune-like signature of John MacKay is said to be duly affixed. The other signatory is represented only by a Cross, or *x*.

For comparison of this “other-worldly” document with a contract of “*three bawbees and a farden*” much later in date, the reader is referred to the closing paragraphs of Chapter Twelve of these annals. Despite all of tragic import which *that* amazing contract of “other-worldliness” implied for the MacKaye of this memoir, he would, I think,—rather than share the crop-gathering talents of its other signatory—still echo the eerie laughter of the ancestral pixies, and still continue to cobble the “shoon” of that master-craftsman of dreams, the Man i’ the Mune.

THE WOLF-HEAD CURRENCY

But the business dealings of Clan *MacAoidh* are not always of the ilk of John in the rhyme, or of the seer of Rhinns. On the contrary, they are more often intermingled with the incorrigible canniness which placed the Wolf’s Head in the clan’s Crest. The legend briefly is this:

When James, the first Scot to become King of England, levied tribute from the northern clans,—wolves being then a ravaging nuisance hard to extirpate,—he gave his highland countrymen the choice of paying their taxes in cash, or in heads of wolves. The

other clans elected to pay in heads of King James himself coined at the mint, but the MacKays—whether from exceeding love of their king's "siller" image, or from exceeding lack of it—chose to pay *their* taxes in wolves' heads.

The canniness in this choice of currency, though common to some of his forbears, has no analogue in the affairs of Steele MacKaye; the ready audacity of it, however, finds its own fellow in him, as he was ever quick to choose "the Wolf at the Door" in preference to the Crown-badge of servility.

Will, Vision, Unworldliness, Courage: these ancestral qualities of the legendary *MacAoidh* find indeed their later analogues in him, of whom his friend and fellow inventor, Thomas A. Edison, has written:

"Steele MacKaye was one of the most original men that I have ever met. He had a brilliant imagination and great energy, and besides he had all the charm of those peculiar men who give no thought to commercialism."

THE MIDLAND WANDERERS

(Historical Twilight)

FOLK LIFE OF THE CLAN—ROB DONN MACKAY, GAELIC POET

An ancient manuscript by one Andrew Simson, discovered in the Advocates Library at Edinburgh, mentions the MacKays as far back as the time of Robert Bruce. The clan name itself, *MacAoidh*, is said to have originated in the twelfth century. According to different spoken idioms, it is variously spelled as MacKay, MacKie, McKay, McKie, Mackey, Mackghie, Macky, etc. The chief of the clan, Lord Reay, spells it MacKay.

From the highland Reay country sprang the renowned Gaelic poet, Rob Donn MacKay, in whose published "Orain agus Dain" ("Songs and Poems," Glasgow, 1899), the people of the region are described as always having been "endowed with the poetic gift."

"Their varied feelings in joy and sorrow, in peace and in war, found fit expression in song. After the Reformation these feelings took the form of religious poetry: yet not wholly of a religious type. The life of the sheeling gave rise to the love song, and on a calm summer evening the mountain sides would be vocal with the heart speech of youth; the harvest was lightened by rhythmic music and chorus; the

waulking song made the long winter night less irksome; every battle victory was recited, and the dirge was chanted as requiem for the dead."

PERSECUTION OF THE COVENANTERS: *Aoidh*, THE *MAC-LESS*

In this type of region and of folk life the remote direct ancestors of Steele MacKaye, in northernmost Scotland near the Hebrides, were nurtured for centuries till the time of their expulsion from the highlands about the middle of the seventeenth century. For some years previous, the earliest Scotch Covenanters had taken solemn oath, or covenant, to uphold the Presbyterian religion against the encroachments of prelacy and popery.

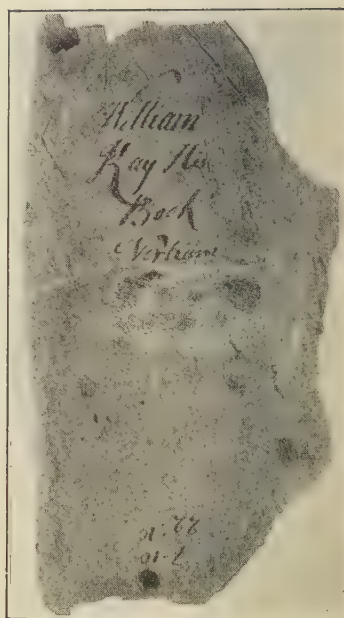
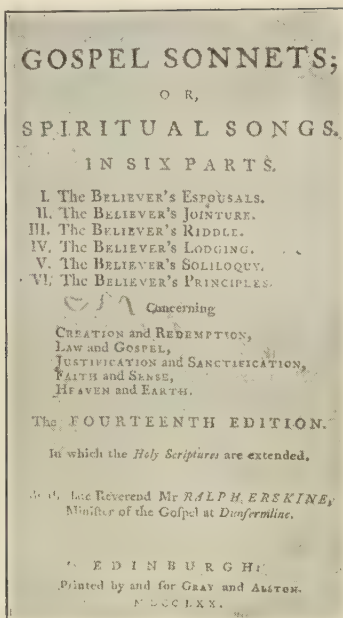
"I am sorry," writes Sir Henry Wotton, "to hear of new oaths in Scotland between the *Covenanters*, who they say will have none but Jesus Christ to reign over them."

In the bitter dissensions which followed throughout the century, many thousands of the Covenanters were deprived of their lands and estates, and driven from their highland homes to the lowlands, or to lands overseas, especially to Holland and Sweden and to America, where some of their ancient folk heritage still survives in our own southern highlands of the Appalachians.

By these persecutions, legal as well as religious, some of the staunchest of the MacKay Covenanters, who refused to renounce their faith, were deprived of the right to use the *Mac* in their name—a clan symbol as ancient and as dear as their homes. This deprivation was stoutly resisted, and family tradition tells of one David of the clan whose ears were cut off as penalty for his resistance. The persecutions of 1638, '43 and '88 were especially harsh.

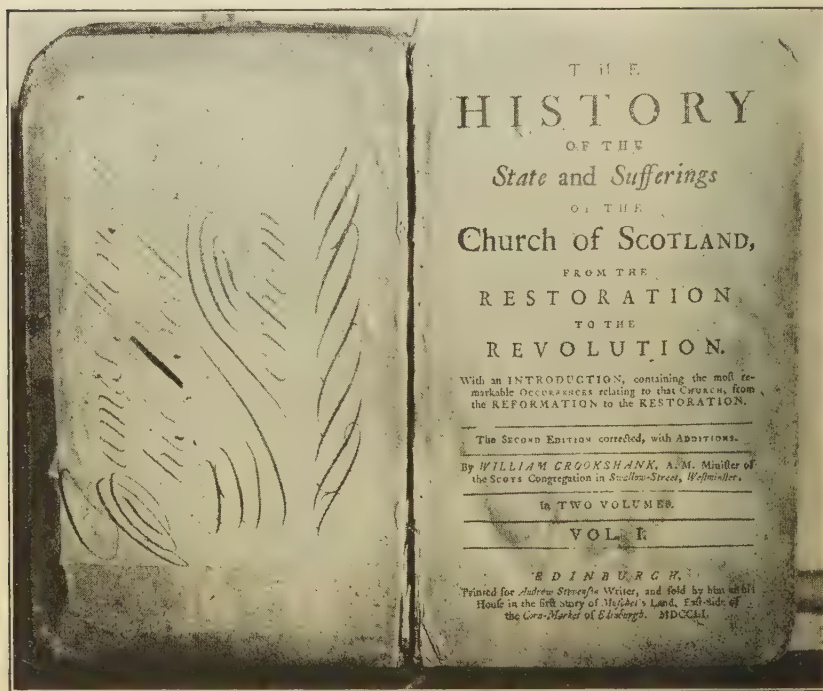
So the spirit of *MacAoidh* wandered once more as *Aoidh*, "the stranger," into new lands where no one hailed him as *Mac*, "the son" of his race. But the persecutions he had suffered for conscience, in refusing a yoke of servile obedience to tyranny, had kindled in him a fiery love of emancipation and reform which blazed anew in each succeeding generation.

So it happens that there are many of the name *Kay* scattered through the Scottish lowlands and uplands, as well as through foreign countries, among whom one in Sweden distinguished for her pioneering reforms was the author, Ellen Key (pronounced *Kí*). And so it happens that, before the middle of the eighteenth century, we find settled in the southern uplands, on the English border, one William Kay (pronounced *Kí*), the earliest direct Scotch an-



TITLE PAGE AND FLY-LEAF

(Signed by William Kay, or by his son, "Wallie") of book brought to America from Scotland in 1799, by "Wallie" Kay (grandfather of Steele MacKaye) page 14.



cestor known by name to the chronicler of these annals. This William Kay, "master of the cotton-spinning mills" at Norham, seven miles up the river from Berwick-on-Tweed, was the great-grandfather of Steele MacKaye.

THE SOUTHERN UPLANDERS

(*Historical Record*)

NORHAM AND BERWICK-ON-TWEED
WILLIAM KAY: THE MILL BY THE SCOTCH BORDER

The most noted play of MacKaye is *Hazel Kirke*, first named *An Iron Will*. By record one of the most successful plays in English, it has been witnessed by millions of spectators during more than forty years of performances in America, England and in many lands. The opening scene of the play is laid at a mill, by a stream in an English shire. The plot of the play hinges on an event at the Scotch border and on the "iron will" of *Dunstan Kirke*, owner of the mill. MacKaye himself acted the part of *Dunstan*.

Whether, as author and actor, the obdurate iron of his covenanting ancestors worked in his blood to create images of character and plot in reference to an ancient homeland he himself had never encountered in the flesh, is matter for conjecture. The coincidence, however, is too striking to pass unrecorded at this point of retrospect.

THE KAYS AND MORISONS: ROBERT BURNS AND MARY MORISON

William Kay himself was not—like *Dunstan* in the play—a miller of flour. He was the owner and "master" of the cotton-spinning mills at Norham, a prosperous leader of the community, whose then eminent minister, James Morison, was his wife's brother.

During the career of Steele MacKaye occasional reference is found, in published articles, to a seemingly fabulous forbear of his, a Scotch minister who was said to have preached for over a hundred years in one parish, where he died at the age of one hundred and twenty-two. Some painstaking research has not served to disprove these figures, but has resulted in estimating the length of this pastorate as at least seventy years, and has definitely identified the fabulous minister with the Rev. James Morison, pastor and founder at Norham of one of the first congregational churches in England, and founder there, in 1761, of the first Sunday School

in the world, nineteen years before the one accredited to Robert Raikes * as being the first.

A progressive innovator, descended from a long line of ministers and writers, James Morison was himself an author of wide repute in his day. Dr. Henry van Dyke informs me that Morison is still well remembered in the Presbyterian church as the author of several familiar hymns. His most popular book was *The Practical Sabbatarian*, 1761, and in view of the universal spread of Sabbath Schools since their founder wrote it, this excerpt is here quoted from its now crumbling pages, wherein their author's rhythmic feeling is stressed by the old italics:

"Our Christian Sabbath is a *golden*, but a *little* spot of time; like a draught of rich wine, it is lushious, but it is *quickly* drank off; Our *sweetest* Sabbath here is but the passage of a *day*. . . . It is the soul's market which is *presently* over. . . . But our Sabbath *above* shall be stretched out to *all eternity*. . . . The beautiful fabrick of the world shall be taken down, and the *Sabbath of Christians* shall be rolled up together; but our Sabbath *above* shall never be shut in with any period or termination."

The rapt fervor and cadence of this shepherd of his people is closely kinned to that sublimating poetry of wild nature concerning which his Scotch countryman and contemporary, Robert Burns, wrote to a friend:

"I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, are we a piece of machinery; or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities: a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave."

Not far from that same countryside of Burns, the banks of the Tweed were a region of curlews and plover and natural poetry; and there those "awful and important realities" were the themes of daily discourse between William Kay and his wife, minister Morison's sister, who as a girl shared her maiden name with the still

* "Robert Raikes," says the *Century Dictionary*, "an English publisher and philanthropist (1735-1811), was the originator of the modern Sunday Schools, the first of which he established at Gloucester in 1780.

unidentified lassie, of whom Burns sang in one of his most famous lyrics:

*"If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought of Mary Morison."*

This characterising appeal is of a kind and mood wherein the poet might aptly have addressed a lass who was kin to the widely-regarded author and minister of Norham, James Morison, whose home was but a few leagues distant from that of Burns. Moreover, near-by at Dunfermline, lived an intimate friend of James Morison and his family—the poet-minister, Ralph Erskine, kin perhaps to the Erskine friend of Burns, often mentioned in his biography. Whether these relevant data may relate the *Mary* of Burns' poem to the present biography remains a "kindredly" interesting surmise; for Mary Morison of Norham, having married William Kay, became the great-grandmother of Steele MacKaye, amid stormy omens of the Scottish elements—as this family legend recounts:

"WALLIE KAY'S FLOOD"

On the eleventh of October, 1763, the little towns of Norham and Berwick-on-Tweed were visited by a portent of elemental nature which was to be remembered locally for generations and recalled in tradition by emigrants to a "far countrie." Over a hundred years later it was still spoken of there as "Wallie Kay's Flood." For while the tides of the river Tweed rose suddenly in a wild storm of unprecedented power, Mary Morison Kay gave birth to a "bairn," the first and only son of William, for whom he was named. Thirty-seven years later, this William Kay, Jr. (whom tradition always calls "Wallie," or "Willie") was to become the founder of his "house" in America.

Tradition relates of Mary's son "Wallie" that he was a master hand with the fiddle, combining rare aptitude for his tunes with rare devotion to his catechism. The latter was taught him by his mother and by his Uncle Morison.—"A handsome, middle-heighted lad, with a fine tenor voice," "hair and eyes dark brown," Wallie married at about twenty-five his first wife, Elizabeth, who bore him four children. Of his years at Norham, and at Berwick where he also appears to have lived, all that can be gleaned is from a few

ancient letters of "Scotch cousins," * and from an old book (by the poet-minister, Erskine), engagingly entitled:

"GOSPEL SONNETS, or Spiritual Songs, in Six Parts: the Fourteenth Edition, Edinburgh. By the late Reverend Ralph Erskine, Minister of the Gospel at Dunfermline, Printed by and for Gray and Alston, MDCCLXX."

On a torn flyleaf of this book is written in ink, with a bold hand: *William Kay His Book Norham*.† Among its thumb-worn contents is printed a quaintly sententious poem by Erskine, ‡ *Thus Think and Smoke Tobacco*, beginning with these stanzas:

"The Indian Weed now withered quite
Though green at noon, cut down at night,
Shows thy decay;
All flesh is hay:
Thus think and smoke tobacco.

"And when the smoke ascends on high
Then thou beholdest the vanity
Of worldly stuff
Gone with a puff:
Thus think and smoke tobacco.

"In vain th' unlighted pipe you blow.
Your pains in outward means are so,
Till heavenly fire
Your heart inspire:
Thus think and smoke tobacco!"

The book itself was sufficiently dear and companionable to Wallie Kay for him to pack it with his worldly goods when he decided to leave his old home forever and set out for America.

* Cf. Appendix for these and other Kay kindred.

† Whether this is the signature of "Wallie," or of his father, William, is uncertain. The book's date, 1770, may indicate the latter. Cf. name chart and illustration, in this chapter.

‡ A weird story, related by William Kay concerning the wife of Ralph Erskine, is included in Appendix.

This personal decision arose from a momentous social movement in which he and his father appear to have become earnestly interested—the earliest beginnings of socialism in Great Britain. Less than twenty years later (1817), Robert Owen, cotton mill manager (the founder of English socialism), was to communicate his report on the poor law to the House of Commons. But at this very time (1798-'99), Owen was negotiating to become manager and part owner of the cotton mills at New Lanark, a few miles from Norham where the Kays had their cotton mills.

Cotton came from America and, for most of a century, was intimately the industrial symbol of human slavery. In Great Britain it was already an inflammable tow to spread from mill to mill the fiery ideas of industrial moral reformers. Whether at this time Robert Owen, twenty-nine, and "Wallie" Kay, thirty-seven, were personally acquainted is unknown.* though very probable; for their eldest sons—Robert Dale Owen and James Morrison McKaye—were in later years intimately associated, in that stupendous conflagration of cotton, the American Civil War, as special commissioners, appointed by Lincoln, on conditions of negro slavery in the south. (Note their photographs, at that era, in Chapter Three.)

Here, then, on the Scotch border, in the last years of the eighteenth century, the same social impulses which were to found, under Robert Owen, the new world Utopia of New Harmony, Indiana (1825), were already setting on foot, a quarter of a century earlier, a related plan of colonisation for a better social order overseas.†

At Norham and Berwick, in 1798-'99, this colonisation enterprise had seized the imaginations of a band of enthusiasts among whom "Wallie" Kay was one of the most ardent. For some years there had come to these townspeople tidings from the upper highlands of the Hudson, in America, concerning the settlement of land there, at Argyle, New York, by an emigration of Campbell highlanders,

* The lost autobiography of Col. James Morrison McKaye, if ever found, may reveal this and much more. Cf. page ii, 168; also Index, under *Owen* and *McKaye*.

† The formative influence of these idealistic impulses, through Owen's New Harmony, upon the young manhood of Abraham Lincoln has been revealingly suggested by Miss Ida M. Tarbell, and a like influence (through this Utopian exodus of "Wallie" Kay) upon the youth of "Wallie's" son may well have been definitely instrumental in associating J. M. McKaye and R. D. Owen under President Lincoln in the cause of Emancipation for the enslaved black race in the 'Sixties.—Cf., in Chapter III, "Col. McKaye: a Footnote to American History," page i, 100, and pages following.

among whom, as early as 1764, a tract of 47,000 acres had been divided by lot. At this later period (1798-'99) the south and west portions of this tract (including the present town of Fort Edward) were still practically unsettled, and the definite opportunity was open for a new emigration from the Old World, under more socialised impulses than those of the earlier migration.

Thus the Kay cotton mills became the centre of a local ferment for founding overseas an ideal landed settlement in the New World. to become there a transplanted Scotch "neighbourhood" of agricultural work, social betterment and religious devotion. "Fired with enthusiasm," and provided with God-speed and funds by his father, "Wallie" Kay joined this emigration. Bidding farewell to his kinsfolk, he took with him his wife and some of his children. In his hand-luggage were Bible, fiddle, *Gospel Sonnets* and psalm-book, and—packed in a little pewter box—an ivory-handled razor, the gift of his father, which we shall glimpse further down the years.

So with the band of his fellow countrymen (which tradition records as consisting of one hundred and ten men, women and children), "Wallie" Kay set sail from Berwick-on-Tweed for America, where in 1800 we find him settled in Washington County, New York, in the township of Argyle, named for the Scotch Duke of Argyle.

AMERICA: THE HUDSON UPLANDERS; SCOTCH COLONY OF ARGYLE;
"LAND, LABOUR, LEARNING AND RELIGION"

Between the upper Hudson valley and the western border of Vermont, the fertile uplands of their new home may have recalled to them their old, but with a wilder and more rugged beauty. "Land, labour, learning and religion"—these were watchwords of a pioneering Utopia based upon Yankee farming and Scotch faith. Characteristically, this faith was more bound up (at this earlier date) with "other-worldly" aspirations of a stark religion than with those more complex ideals of worldly sociality which later animated the brief colony of New Harmony. Moreover, under auspicious farming conditions, the tensions of Old World social perplexities tended here to relax, while religious stringencies (as earlier at Plymouth) tended to perpetuate their austerity. So at Argyle "impractical" vision was more freighted with practical success than befell at New Harmony, or at the still later colony of Brook Farm, in 1841.

Here indeed, at Argyle, an idealistic and co-operative neighbourliness close to the soil had no such public literary expounders as a Hawthorne, a Ripley, or a Dana. And here no Margaret Fuller

left behind her such colourful afterglow as still radiates from *The Blithedale Romance*. Yet here, in a strange blend of religious mysticism, canny industry and reverence for the classics, authorship was modestly represented by the then well-known scholar, Rev. Peter Bullions, author of widely used text-books of Latin; and here romance and *belles lettres* were symbolised by the courtly person of a lady, first cousin to Sir Walter Scott, who had refused the hand of the poet-baronet's brother because of his too close kinship. This lady, afterward married to a Mr. Watson of the colony, was a first cousin of Elizabeth, the first wife of William ("Wallie") Kay.

THE FARM ON MOSES KILL; JANE MCCREA AND THE INDIANS

The estate of William Kay was located on a small river called Moses Kill, in the present township of Fort Edward, then part of Argyle. Of William's life there we know only that, owner of a prosperous stock-farm, he was accounted a "generous and gentle" neighbour, "beloved by all the colony." In church (the United Presbyterian Congregation of South Argyle) he was precentor, leading the hymns with his fine tenor voice and "lining them out," as it was considered a sin, in that Scotch congregation, to have an organ. That would have savoured too much of the Roman Church, their old persecutors.

"On William Kay's Argyle farm," writes Miss Millicent Alling *, of Rochester, N. Y., granddaughter of William Kay, "the Sabbath day was kept in the strictest manner. All food eaten on the Sabbath must be cooked on the day before. If the men servants neglected to shave or clean their boots on Saturday night, they were obliged to ride to church the next day without doing so. On the Sabbath no visits were allowable and no 'company.' In those days of the colony, the school-teacher boarded two weeks at a time with each family.

"It so happened one Sunday afternoon, when the teacher was staying at our grandfather's (William Kay's) house, that the young man to whom she was engaged drove up to the house. It was a terrible sight—such desecration of the Sabbath!—and Grandfather met him at the door. With courtesy but great firmness, he was told it was impossible for the young lady to receive him on the Sabbath day. The young man departed in wrath, while his sweetheart stood at the window with streaming eyes. Years afterward, my mother, then a child, told us she feared it was very sinful of her, but she could not help sympathising with the young lady.

"On this estate of William Kay took place a very interesting historical

* Steele MacKaye's first cousin—the daughter of his "Scotch Aunt Sarah" (Kay) Alling. Cf., in Appendix, note on Argyle church.

incident. John Fiske, in his *American Revolution*, relates it, but not as our mother told it to us. Almost every encyclopædia has a version of its own. It is the touching and gruesome story of Jane McCrea, murdered on July 27, 1777, by Indian allies of Burgoyne, and buried under a pine-tree. As children, my mother, Sarah Kay, and her sisters, Jane and Elizabeth, took good care never to go near the old pine-tree except in broad daylight, and even then, if they were walking, they turned their skirts over their heads and *ran! * "*

Soon after William Kay's settlement in Argyle, his first wife died, and he afterwards married (Jan. 3, 1805) Sarah Wilkinson McCracken,† daughter of Thomas Wilkinson, of Enfield, Conn., and widow of Samuel McCracken, of Granville, N. Y., a kinsman of Chancellor McCracken. To Sarah and William Kay, there was born at Argyle, October 6, 1805, James Morrison Kay—the father of Steele MacKaye.

JAMES MORRISON KAY (MCKAY—MCKAYE)

This, their eldest son, by dint of his own resourceful character, was destined to a stirring career, distinguished in honours and wealth, becoming in after years the associate and friend of the foremost leaders of his country in art, business and government, and upon his retirement, as the first president of the Western Union Telegraph Company, continuing to be a patron of art and literature, always—till his death (at Paris, April 6, 1888) in vigorous old age—the devoted counsellor of his son, the dramatist, in the latter's career.

At Argyle, the influences of his home and the Argyle colony implanted very early in young James Morrison Kay a Scotch enthusiasm for religion and scholarship, especially for ancient history. So in boyhood the Bible and Herodotus had already touched his imagination in a self-teaching which, later in life, enthused him to make extensive travels in Palestine and Egypt. At the age of

* "After the Revolution," continues Millicent Alling, "Jane McCrea's relatives sent out a party to find her body. Led by some Indians, they were taken to the old pine-tree. Grandfather (William Kay) offered to have the remains placed in a shed on his grounds till sent for. As a child, mother remembered carriages containing Jane McCrea's family coming from Albany with a coffin, for the interment near Fort Edward." Cf. in Appendix the version of Jane McCrea's story, as told by Sarah McKay Alling.

† Sarah Wilkinson (whose daguerreotype as Mrs. "Wallie" Kay is reproduced in this chapter, was a kinswoman of General Wilkinson of the Mexican War. In 1852, during a White House dinner, at which her children, Col. James McKaye and his sister Jane (Steele MacKaye's father and aunt) were guests of President Fillmore, General Wilkinson who was present observed to Col. McKaye: "My dear Colonel, I cannot help remarking that your sister is the breathing image of my own daughter." Cf. further data in Appendix.

seventy-three he wrote in a letter from abroad (June 12, 1878), addressed to "my very dear grandsons, Arthur, Harold, Willie, Jamie and Percy":

"Perhaps you may like to write me about your lessons. If you are studying geography and history, which are two of the most important branches of study, I hope you give your work the serious attention needful to become good scholars. . . . I want you to understand that your Grandfather has been all his life a very hard-working student. When he was about twelve years of age, he began to earn his own living, and every moment he was not obliged to work he devoted to study. From that age on, it was always work, study and no play. Of course, to exercise and play sometimes is very good, only it should never become an occasion for unkindly quarreling. For the very best quality in every human being is honest, sincere love, out of which grow all other good qualities. This is the beginning of the moral nature in the human heart, for so God has arranged his creation."

In this solicitude for the sons of Steele MacKaye, in their home tutelage as boys, he doubtless recalled the abrupt ending of his own boyhood studies at Argyle.

A PIONEER OF TWELVE

There, one clear cold morning, with snow on the ground (March 6, 1816), his father, "Wallie" Kay, said to his wife: "Sarah, I believe I'll drive out the bays"—a pair of high-mettled horses which he allowed none but himself to exercise.

It was a casual remark but momentous in the family history. For, about an hour later, a neighbour several miles away, looking from his window, called to *his* wife: "Look! There's 'Wallie' Kay's team just dashed up to the door, and nobody driving them! I'll go see what it means." And going out, he found William Kay in the bottom of the sleigh—dead. It was thought he had died instantly of a stroke, caused by the strain of curbing the unruly bays.

Thus, by his father's death, young James Kay was confronted with aiding the support of his three younger sisters and his brother (Sarah, Jane, Elizabeth and David), and of his mother, who—till her death in 1861—was, by description, "an old Spartan, who ruled her children with a rod of iron." The alternative, then, before him was to become a farmer of Argyle or a student-participant in the great world beyond the hills. He chose the latter and, about a year after his father's death, he left home. (Cf. page 22.)

Before daylight, without informing the family, he packed some hand luggage, containing, as a keepsake, his father's (and grand-

father's) razor in the little Scotch pewter box,* and so set forth, in golden expectations.—From the top of a hill, just at sunrise, he looked back upon the homestead of his childhood. There, mysticly in the doorway, appeared still to stand his father playing the fiddle, as he had often remembered him, and this fond image of "Wallie" Kay seemed to bid him Godspeed on the path of his new westward pioneering.

BUFFALO, THE HALF-INDIAN VILLAGE

So, at the age of twelve, he set out alone on foot for Albany. On the way he heard of the wonders of the new frontier town of Buffalo, near the falls of Niagara, and decided to make that his goal. Working his way through regions still primitive and partly primeval, he experienced adventures which afterward held his hearers spellbound. At the end of two months he reached Buffalo, then "a half-Indian village." There he knew no one, but applied for work at a land office, "to copy and run errands, and so worked his way up." During this time he became the friend of Millard Fillmore who, in 1820, made his way to Buffalo and there, while studying law, supported himself by teaching school and aiding the postmaster. Joining Fillmore in this study of law, young James Kay prepared himself to become both a lawyer † and a soldier.

Having earned sufficient money for the purpose, his desire for higher education led him to return east, where in 1823 he entered "The American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy," at Norwich, Vermont, afterwards incorporated as Norwich University. This institution was then the equal in numbers and standing of its close rival, Dartmouth College, situated about a mile away, in Hanover, New Hampshire. That whole inland hill-region of the Connecticut Valley was a centre of literary culture, many years before the "golden age" of Emerson's and Longfellow's Concord and Cambridge, nearer the sea.‡

* This legended pewter-box and razor, of William Kay in Scotland, have been handed down to his great-great-great grandson, Robert Keith MacKaye.

† "I studied night and day seven years before I was permitted even to begin the practice of law," Colonel McKaye wrote to his son, Steele MacKaye, Nov. 2, 1872.

‡ An anthology of the north hills poetry of Vermont and New Hampshire is being devotedly collected by Walter A. Coates, of Montpelier, Vt., editor of *The Drift Wind Magazine*, which is also expressing a modern revival of Vermont poetry, in the works of Wendell Phillips Stafford, J. Howard Flower, and others. Of this Vrest Orton has recently become a "guest-editor."

VERMONT & CONN., NORWICH UNIVERSITY; *MAC-AOIDH* NO LONGER
"THE *MAC-LESS*"

This Academy,* founded in 1819 by Captain Alden Partridge—U.S.A. Supt. of the National Academy at West Point, 1815-'17—was the first military school in the United States outside of West Point and the first technical scientific school in the English-speaking world. By 1828, there were twelve hundred students, representing every state and territory in the Union, as well as the British Provinces, Mexico, several South American countries and the West Indies.

"Many of the pupils," stated a prospectus of 1825, "walk with facility forty miles per day. In the summer of 1823, several of them left Norwich at daybreak, walked to the summit of Ascutney Mountain, three thousand feet high, and returned to Norwich about nine o'clock of that evening—a total of forty-six miles."

One of those hardy pedestrians, then eighteen-years-old, was James (Morrison) McKay. From 1825 to 1829 the academy was temporarily removed, by invitation, to Middletown, Connecticut, where, on Sept. 10, 1826, the seventh anniversary of the school's founding, James McKay delivered an "oration on the character of Adams and Jefferson." From 1825 to '27, James McKay was both student and Instructor in Mathematics and, after graduating, became the Principal of the Academy during two years (1827 to '29), at Norwich,† while the academy was in transition of returning there from Connecticut. On March 18, 1828, at Aaron Partridge's house (still standing) in Norwich, Vermont, James Morrison McKay was married to Elizabeth Partridge, the daughter of Aaron Partridge, brother of the school's founder. On the following November 3d, he cast his first vote for Andrew Jackson as President.

Not long before these first steps of his maturity, he had made an important decision, effected by thought of his ancestors and affecting his descendants. Abbreviated to *Mc*, he restored to his name the Clan *Mac* which, more than a century earlier, had been removed by persecutions of his ancestral Scotch Covenanters. In this decision his near kindred followed his lead and did like-

* Cf., in Appendix, further data concerning Norwich University and James McKay.

† One hundred years later (1927), just across the Connecticut river, his grandson, James MacKaye, Professor in Philosophy at Dartmouth, is teaching advanced students the principles of "Utilitechnics," underlying his *Economy of Happiness*.

wise. So, after four generations, *Aoidh*, the *Mac-less*, once more raised his right hand as *MacAoidh* and, "*manu forti*," cast the first ballot of James Morrison McKay in a new world for "fighting Andy of New Orleans."

BUFFALO. WELLS FARGO EXPRESS; PARTNERSHIP WITH MILLARD FILLMORE; MARRIAGE WITH EMILY STEELE

Meantime, his earnings had assisted his mother and family to remove, in 1824, from Argyle—by a chartered canal boat on the Erie Canal (then not yet officially opened)—to Rochester, N. Y. Thus, in 1829, having helped Captain Alden Partridge to re-establish the Academy at Norwich, Vt., where it soon became "Norwich University," James McKay returned west to Buffalo and established there, on his own part, a new military school, the third in this country, the Buffalo High School and Military Academy, on Pearl Place, the structure of which is still intact. For this Academy, of which he was the principal, he built a "Lancasterian belfry," long an old landmark. While conducting his school, he continued his law studies and entered the bar. Meantime, his first wife (Eliza Partridge) died, on the birth of their only son, William Henry.

In 1830, Millard Fillmore, who had left Buffalo, returned there and, in 1832, invited James McKay to become junior partner in a law firm with himself and Nathan K. Hall. In after years, Fillmore became President of the United States, Hall—Postmaster-General, and McKay—a Special Commissioner appointed by Lincoln.

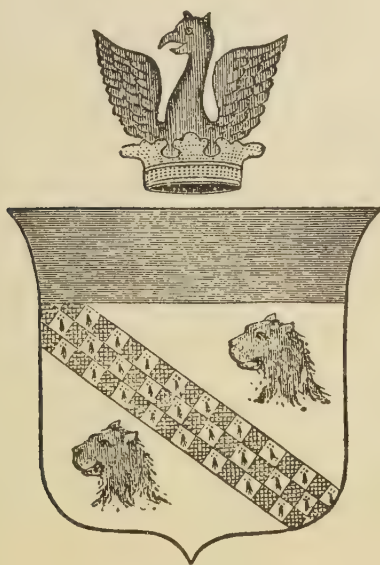
During Jackson's administration and afterward, James McKay, having become "Colonel McKaye," was intimate in Washington with Webster, Clay and other leaders of Congress and the government. He was the chief organizer of the American and Livingston, Fargo & Co. Express, Wells Fargo Express, and later of the United States Express and the American Telegraph Company. One of the wealthiest citizens of Buffalo, he was described as "a man of commanding appearance, inclined to pursuits of general literature."

"On one occasion," wrote a fellow townsman*, "the Young Men's Association urged Col. McKaye to deliver a lecture for one of their winter courses, which he did. It had a strange title: 'The Men in Woolen Jupes seen about the Baths of Mount D'Or.'"

* Deshler-Welsh, in Buffalo Sunday World, April 10, 1881. Cf. Appendix.

In his audience there may have been present Miss Emily Benton Steele, daughter of Oliver Steele, editor and newspaper publisher of New Haven. Her family had removed, in 1831, from Connecticut to Buffalo, and Emily had recently come—after completing school in Boston—from the home of her mother's sister, Elizabeth Loring Wellington, in Belmont (then part of Watertown, Mass.). At Belmont, in July, 1835, she was married to James Morrison McKay.

THE STEELE FAMILY



John Steele ..

Here, then, we reach the confluence of two main biologic currents from which the life-stream of Steele MacKaye had its being. Following now the Steele course of inheritance back to the beginnings of New England history, we shall find it mingled there with early stock of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, characterized by a pioneering hardihood of aspiration analogous to that Scotch fervour which founded the Utopian colony at Argyle in the Hudson Uplands.

THE STEELS AND BRADFORDS; GOV. WILLIAM BRADFORD,
OF PLYMOUTH

For contrasting themes of his noble New England Symphony, Edgar Stillman Kelley, the American composer (himself a direct descendant of the Plymouth governor) has chosen the following excerpts from Bradford's "History of Plymouth Plantation" (1620—1648) written by the foremost New England pioneer, Governor William Bradford of the *Mayflower*, of whom Steele MacKaye was a direct descendant, eighth in generation:

I: *"All great and honourable actions are accompanied by great difficulties and must be enterprised and overcome with answerable courages."*

II: *"Warm and fair weather: the birds sang in the woods most pleasantly."*

III: *"Great lamentations and heaviness."*

IV: *"The fit way to honour and lament the departed is to be true to one another, and to work together bravely for the cause to which living and dead have consecrated themselves."*

These words aptly express the strangely contrasting themes of Steele MacKaye's life and death. They are also apt to this record of his Steele ancestors; for on Sept. 16, 1680, Mercy Bradford, the Governor's granddaughter, married Samuel Steel, of Hartford, Conn., grandson of John Steel, the founder of that town.

In the maternal line of Steele MacKaye, the earliest recorded ancestor of his mother, Emily Benton Steele, was one Richard Steel, of Fairsted, Essex County, England. There Richard's son, John, was baptized on December 12, 1591. This John Steel was the emigrant to America. In 1629-'30, with others of his townsmen, he "had transportation" to New England, where he became a prominent leader of the Massachusetts colony and one of the proprietors of Cambridge.

JOHN STEEL, PROPRIETOR OF CAMBRIDGE AND FOUNDER OF
CONNECTICUT

Concerning his career, the following is narrated, in his "History of the Steele Family," by Daniel Steele Durrie, who points out that John Steel (not the Rev. Thomas Hooker, as stated in the text books) was the authentic founder of Hartford and the colony of Connecticut:

"John Steel, educated for the Magistracy, qualified by education, energy of character, and all the requisites for founding *new settlements in a new world*, was active and self-denying in the enterprise. The name of Steel appears *first* in connection with Dorchester, Mass., ten years after the arrival of the Pilgrims in the *Mayflower*. Next, he is found to have been one of the *Proprietors* of Cambridge (first called New Town), in 1632. Two others, George and Henry Steel, were also proprietors at the same time. Mr. John Steel, having been made freeman or elector by the court in 1634, was elected a representative from Cambridge in 1635, Cambridge being the capital of the colony, as it was soon after the seat of the university.

"During this period, however, the numerous arrivals at Cambridge, the want of pasture lands, and a *dislike of some regulations*, which were thought to *circumscribe their rights as freemen*, induced a portion of the people to seek another location. The proposed enterprise met with strong opposition, but at length its advocates obtained the consent of the majority; and Mr. John Steel, in the autumn of 1635, as Magistrate, led the pioneer band of men safely through the pathless wilderness to a new location on the Connecticut river. . . . Arriving late in the season, they had to endure all the hardships of a severe winter, while clearing the forest, constructing their rude dwellings, securing food, and protecting themselves against wild beasts and warlike savages. Bravely persevering, while other expeditions during the same season failed, they succeeded. And in the ensuing summer came the main portion of their company—men, women and children, with their minister, Rev. Mr. Hooker,—to their new home.

"Here, on the margin of the river, they laid the foundations of a *new town*, afterwards named Hartford, and of a new colony (Connecticut), the *third* of the colonies of New England. And here, during 23 years, elected to the principal colony court, John Steel was present at 88 of its sessions, engaged in its legislation and judiciary, and for 4 years was its Secretary and Recorder. For nearly 20 years he was also Recorder of the town of Hartford, and for a time Recorder of Farmington. . . . Thus—unambitious except to do good—did he pass some thirty of his active years, and died November 25, 1665."

His son, John Steel, Jr., was father of Samuel Steel who married Mercy Bradford,* the daughter of Major William Bradford, son of the Plymouth governor. Mercy's son, Daniel Steele, was the father of Timothy, whose seventh and youngest child—born at Hartford, in 1781,—was Oliver Steele, the grandfather of Steele MacKaye.

* A silver tankard (converted into a pitcher), once owned by Mercy Bradford's brother, Samuel, is still preserved in use by his direct descendant, the distinguished New England author, Gamaliel Bradford, at his home in Wellesley Hills, Mass., where this biographer has recently shared its ancestral hospitality, at the seventh generation breakfast table.

OLIVER STEELE WEDS SARAH LORING: PUBLISHES
CONNECTICUT HERALD—1804-'17

Tradition and his oil portrait record some striking resemblances to his grandson. Of an arresting physical beauty, Oliver Steele in his youth was high strung and romantic in temperament, literary and artistic in gifts, picturesque and colourful in his dress. Restive under restraints at home, as a boy he ran away and went to sea. It was probably at the port of Boston that he became acquainted with Captain David Loring, a redoubtable sea-skipper of Hull, whose daughter, Sarah (by Elizabeth Fairservice * of Boston) he married in 1803. There, at the age of twenty-two he took up seriously the pursuit of letters and journalism, encouraged by his older brother, Daniel, who was a bookseller and publisher at Albany, N. Y.

For a year or two he resided in Boston, occasionally visiting with his wife the neighbouring home of her sister, Elizabeth, Mrs. Jeduthan Wellington,—at Watertown (now Belmont), Mass. In Boston, Oliver Steele's first child, Lucy Ann, was born, Oct. 6, 1804. Soon afterward the family moved to New Haven, Conn., where Oliver Steele became (with occasional partners) the publisher, printer and editor of the *Connecticut Herald*, from Dec. 18, 1804, to Oct. 8, 1817. In his first New-Year-issue, 1805, he printed the following advertisement, which may well have recalled to him his own "runaway" boyhood and his partiality for pied vestments:

"RAN AWAY—From the subscriber, the 1st inst., an indented Apprentice to the Hatting business, by the name of Theophilus Benedict;—17 years of age—about 5 feet 6 inches high—Had on a blue coat, swansdown vest, cassimere pantaloons, and sowarrow boots.—Whoever will take up and return said boy, shall receive a reasonable reward. AGUR WILDMAN. Guilford, Dec. 21, 1804."

The same issue contained a long letter entitled "Thoughts on Education—Addressed to Heads of Families in Connecticut," by Noah Webster, maker of the dictionary, a friend of Oliver Steele.

STEELE'S ADDRESS TO NEW HAVEN MECHANICS ON
"STAGE-PROPRIETORS"

A leading citizen of New Haven, in his capacity as printer, Oliver Steele organised "the General Society of Mechanics of New Haven," one of the earliest organisations of skilled artisans in

* Cf. Appendix.



TWO PAGES OF REV. JAMES MORISON'S TEXT-BOOK
for the first Sabbath School, founded by him at Norham-on-Tweed, 1761 (page 12).



CHIEF OF THE BUFFALO TRIBE OF SENECA
INDIANS
Oil portrait, painted for Col. James McKay,
about 1837 (page 45).



MRS. "WALLIE" KAY
(Née Sarah Wilkinson)
Grandmother of Steele Mackaye. Daguer-
reotype, about 1855 (page 18).



MRS. OLIVER STEELE (1774-1844)
(Née Sarah Loring).

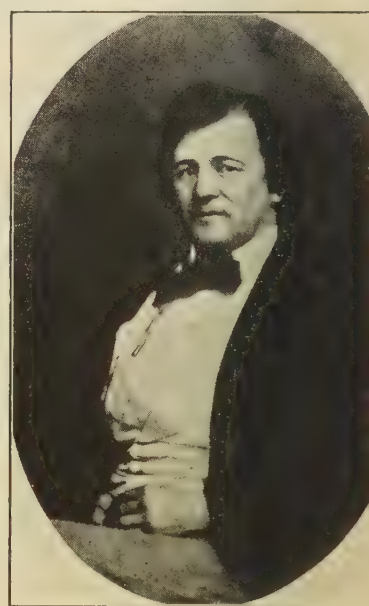


OLIVER STEELE (1781-1826)
Editor of "Connecticut Herald".

GRANDPARENTS OF STEELE MACKAYE (pages 26-27)



"AUNT WELLINGTON"
(1782—1851; pages 23, 26, 32)
(Née Elizabeth Loring).



CHARLES OLIVER FAXON
(1824—1870)
Editor of "Louisville Courier".

Mrs. Jeduthan Wellington, of Belmont, Mass., was the great-aunt of Steele MacKaye. Charles Oliver Faxon was his first-cousin. (Both pictures are from daguerrotypes; Mrs. Steele from an oil painting. The oil portrait of Oliver Steele is owned by Frank B. Steele, of Buffalo.)

America. An address by him to his fellow members, at their quarterly meeting, July 7th, 1813 ("Published by Request" and finely "Printed by Oliver Steele, New Haven, 1813") is preserved in the Yale University Library.

This address of Steele MacKaye's "Grandfather Steele" is written with an evident zest for social idealism, combined with a balanced cogency of reasoning. It was naturally couched for his contemporaries. In the following excerpt, however, one allusion—to a certain "learned profession" on the broad way of "public speaking"—so unwittingly conjures *another* impending Broadway,* that this double reference to the "talents and integrity" of "*stage (coach)-proprietors*" and craftsmanly "*mechanics*," in their respective "*right to associate*," is piquantly relevant to Oliver's "professional" posterity:

"Mechanics, generally speaking, have been the last to form themselves into craftsmanly bodies. . . . Those of other professions have usually taken the lead, such as Lawyers, Physicians, Packet-masters, *Stage-Proprietors*, &c. . . . From constant habit of speaking in public, these learned professions acquire confidence, and so take the lead in all public affairs. . . . Let me not be understood, Gentlemen, as denying their *right* thus to associate. . . . Indeed, I believe, if *every* professional branch could be completely systematised, it would (if conducted with a due regard to the rights of others) prove generally beneficial. . . . Yet it would be concealing the truth, were we not to see, that, however strong our natural processes of mind, unless that mind be cultivated and improved, it will produce nothing but rough matter. . . . Talents and integrity, in a well regulated community like ours, always ought and always will govern. If we do not possess these qualifications, we cannot expect, nay, we *ought* not to expect, the confidence of our fellow citizens, nor the honours and emoluments of office."

In the fall of 1817, on severing his connection with the Connecticut Herald, Oliver Steele went south to Savannah, Georgia. There he published and edited The Savannah Price Current. In 1826, we find him again in New Haven, where he died that spring (March 26th) at the age of forty-five, leaving to tradition an afterglow of his gifted temperament.

OLIVER GRAY STEELE'S FIRST NIAGARA GUIDE-BOOK

His son, Oliver Gray Steele, named for his father's partner (John C. Gray, of Steele & Gray), was born at New Haven, Dec. 16, 1805.

* Cf., on pages ii, 256-257, how 131 Broadway American Dramatists—in 1926—"associated" themselves as a "craftsmanly body."

In 1828, two years after his father's death, he set forth alone, via the new Erie Canal, to Buffalo, N. Y., where he soon met James Morrison McKay, newly returned (1829) to Buffalo from Norwich, Vermont. Of the same age, they soon became fast friends. Oliver G. Steele set up as a printer and bookseller, and ere long was sufficiently prosperous to send for his mother (née Sarah Loring) and his two sisters, Emily Benton Steele (named for Captain George Benton of Hartford, the husband of her Aunt Mittie Steele), and Lavinia P. Steele.

Some twenty-five years earlier (in 1806), the Hon. Augustus Porter (who had married Lavinia, another sister of the elder Oliver Steele) "had come out from Canandaigua and built a saw-mill at Niagara Falls—one of the first Americans to settle in western New York. . . . In 1807, Porter, Barton & Co. commenced the transportation business, over the portage, boating up the river to Black Rock." * Augustus Porter was a brother of Gen. Peter Buel Porter, of the War of 1812, Secretary of War under John Quincy Adams, for whom, at Black Rock, in Buffalo, was named Fort Porter—the birthplace of Steele MacKaye.

This family connection is perhaps responsible for the original urge of the Oliver Steele family to leave New Haven, and cast their lot with Buffalo, at a time when "the town was surrounded by dense woods filled with wild animals."

"In the settlement of Western New York," wrote Oliver Gray Steele, "the impelling motive was the inherent passion of our race to improve its condition. This desire, coupled with moral and physical courage, capacity for labour and love of adventure, constitutes what is usually called enterprise."

With the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, Buffalo became an important station of emigrants en route for the great West, most of whom paused to view the wonders of Niagara. For this itinerant public O. G. Steele wrote and published the first guide-book to Niagara Falls, and another guide to western routes of travel.† From 1830, for a generation, his was the only bookstore of Buffalo, where later he became superintendent of Public Schools, Alderman, founder and president of the Buffalo Academy

* Quoted from a pamphlet by Oliver G. Steele, *The Buffalo Common Schools*, (read before the Buffalo Historical Society, Jan. 23, 1863).

† Steele's *Niagara Guide Book*—a synopsis of Steele's *Book of Niagara Falls* (Buffalo, 1840), and Steele's *Western Guide Book and Emigrant's Directory*, with routes through New York, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, etc. (14th ed. Buffalo, 1846). Cf., in Appendix, statement by G. W. Hosmer concerning O. G. Steele.

of Fine Arts. After his death, his public career was memorialised by an address before the Buffalo Historical Society (June 16, 1880).

LUCY (STEELE) FAXON; THE FAXON BOYS: KITE FLYING
AND "BEAUTIFUL SNOW"

Meantime, his oldest sister, Lucy Ann Steele (1804-1874), had married—in 1823—Charles Faxon (1799-1867), of West Hartford, Conn., with whom she went to live in Clarksville, Tenn., spending part of their years also in Buffalo, where Charles Faxon published and edited several newspapers: from 1831 to 1834, *The Buffalo Republican*; from 1835 to (?) *The Republican* merged with *The Bulletin*, and the weekly *Star*; in 1846, for a short while, *The Literary Messenger*.

His wife, "Aunt Lucy Faxon," was long my father's boon favorite among kinfolk.* Overflowing with affection and bubbling broad humour, she early became a solicitous foster-mother of her young nephew, Jimmy McKay, after his mother died. Lucy Ann and Charles Faxon reared chiefly at Clarksville their family of a dozen talented children. An old-time glimpse of their merry home circle, at Buffalo, while Lucy Ann was taking a vacation in the mountains, may be gleaned from this excerpt of a letter from Emily Steele (two years before her marriage to Col. McKay), addressed from Buffalo to her sister, "Lucy Ann Faxon, Catskill, N. Y.," June 22, 1833:

"Dear Sister—Charles Faxon, myself, and all the little Faxons are in perfect health. Now isn't that delicious news thus far? Methinks you relish it equal to a dish of lobsters. I should sign my name at once, and think you ought to be thankful enough—but I will write a little more just for greens! . . . The children are all very good; the three boys think of nothing but their kites—and enjoy themselves finely. They all expect something wonderful when you return. . . . Seth Hawley and Vin were here, and *don't* you think they played blindfold! And what do you think? Charles Faxon enjoyed the sport equal to any of them, and I would have given anything to have had you see him dodge the girls."

(To which Charles Faxon himself added this postscript): "Emily has almost filled the sheet. She looks out very well for family affairs

* At the age of sixty-seven, from New York, she wrote to Steele MacKaye (April 4, 1871), soon after his Boston debut: "Hearing that lecture of yours, will be the proudest hour of my life. I anticipate you will develop your genius, to be one of the glories of these United States. . . . Imagine yourself hugged and kissed, and give Mary and the children a fond embrace for their 'Auntie' Faxon."

and the children. I have thought, however, she would devour little James before you return from Catskill.* ”

Two of these kite-flying boys, here referred to by their yet unmarried Aunt Emily Steele, were Charles Oliver and Henry W. Faxon, my father's first cousins.

HENRY FAXON AND ARTEMUS WARD; HENRY WATTERSON;
COMMODORE VANDERBILT

Henry W. Faxon † is described by a niece ‡ of his, as “a brilliant man and writer and a great wit.” Residing most of his life in the East, he was an intimate friend of the famous humorist Artemus Ward (Charles Farrar Browne), who once said of him: “Hen Faxon is the father of my wit!” Known to his intimates as “Hen,” Henry Faxon, during the 'Fifties and early 'Sixties was very well known as a journalist in Buffalo, Hartford, and New York City, where he died in 1864. It is a pity that his gay spirit could not have tarried at least a year longer, to glance a twinkling eye through the pages of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (first published in 1865) and discover there “Beautiful Soup”—immortalising parody of his verses on “Beautiful Snow.”

One of the most popular poems in English-speaking countries during two generations, *The Beautiful Snow* was published, anonymously, in *Harper's Weekly*, for Nov. 27, 1858. In 1869, *five years after Faxon's death*, John Whitaker Watson published at Philadelphia a volume of verse, entitled *Beautiful Snow and Other Poems*, claiming that *he* had written the poem, at Hartford, Conn., in November, 1858.—In a recent volume (1923), *Famous Single Poems and the Controversies Which Have Raged Around Them*, by Burton E. Stevenson, the name of Henry W. Faxon is listed among six other claimants to the poem's authorship, and the chief “winning” claimant, Watson, is quoted as saying: “Hen Faxon took spells at it through the newspapers, not exactly claiming it,

* Two other letters to “Mrs. Charles Faxon, Clarksville, Tenn.,” from “Emily B. McKay” in Buffalo, despatched by the hand of Charles Faxon, are inscribed by Emily on the envelope (Sept. 12, 1845): “Favoured by your good-for-nothing troublesome comfort,” and (Sept. 24, 1844): “Favoured by the father of ten chicks.”

† On May 16, 1847, Emily Steele McKay wrote from Buffalo to her sister, Lucy Faxon, in Clarksville, concerning the latter's son, Henry: “My husband is now in Canada for a few days. Mr. McKay has persuaded Henry to learn telegraph writing. They give him at the rate of \$300 a year. Mr. McKay will have it in his power to provide him with a good situation.”

‡ Esther Faxon Lowry, residing in 1926 at Memphis, Tenn.

but letting it be known that the author was not far off."—As "Hen" Faxon was not then alive to refer to the subject in public, I quote here, even after half a century, as a matter of literary record, the following excerpt from a letter, written to me (April 12, 1926) by my cousin, Mrs. Ruth Faxon McCrae, of Chattanooga, Tenn., another niece of Henry Faxon:

"My dear Percy . . . My father, John Wellington Faxon, and several of my aunts have discussed the fact in my presence . . . and I myself have seen the original copy of *The Beautiful Snow*, just as it was first written—with some words crossed out and others substituted—and all my aunts and uncles *knew* that Uncle Henry wrote *The Beautiful Snow*."

A further corroboration of this matter has been written to me (Dec. 31, 1926) by a mutual cousin of the Faxons and myself, Frank B. Steele, of Buffalo, in a statement, from which it appears that *The Beautiful Snow* was first published, as the result of a jesting wager between Henry Faxon and his newspaper chum, Bert Scott, with the name of William Cullen Bryant affixed to the poem by Faxon himself. Having soon afterward been repudiated by Bryant, its appearance without signature in *Harper's Weekly* (as cited above) would thus be accounted for. Frank Steele's statement concerning this is included in the Appendix.

Henry's brother, Charles Oliver Faxon, stands forth also a brilliant figure of an era that created, on the background of old southern aristocracy in Kentucky, "Marse Henry" Watterson and his *Courier-Journal*. This noted newspaper came into being through his friendship with Charles Oliver,* who was editor of the *Louisville Courier*, from 1865 to '69, while Watterson was editor of the *Journal*, whose manager was George D. Prentice. "Marse Henry" was a devoted friend of both Faxon and Prentice and when they both died, within a single fortnight, in 1870, Watterson himself stepped into the breach caused by their sudden deaths and amalgamated the two newspapers as the *Courier-Journal*, which for nearly half a century he made world-famous by his leading editorials. Henry Watterson, who had been also "foster-mothered" by "Aunt Lucy" was a lifelong friend of my father. From his editorial rooms at Louisville, he wrote to me (June 10, 1903):

* Charles Oliver Faxon was earlier the first editor of the Buffalo Daily Gazette, which he started in 1842.

"No son of your father, or grandnephew of Aunt Lucy Faxon, could ask recognition of me without receiving it, doubly augmented by many personal and family considerations."

Of the other children of Oliver Steele and Sarah Loring, Lavinia P. Steele married Hon. Seth C. Hawley, of Buffalo, later Police Commissioner of New York City (where their daughter, Lavinia Hawley, became engaged to George, the son of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt *; Emily Benton Steele—born in New Haven in 1806 or '07—married James Morrison McKay, at Belmont, Mass., in July, 1835, and became the mother of Steele MacKaye.

BUNKER HILL AND "AUNT WELLINGTON": "HOMMAGES"
FROM LAFAYETTE

On the side of Wellington Hill, Belmont, stood the ancestral home of Col. Jeduthan Wellington,† a surviving veteran of the Bunker Hill battle. There, in June, 1825—having attended the Bunker Hill Monument dedication by Daniel Webster—on his way to Lexington, Lafayette stopped to visit the old Colonel. The stone walls, the road, the fruit trees were thronged with cheering onlookers, when the aged French marquis and the Revolutionary soldier met at the gate and embraced. Then the old Yankee Revolutionary went into his well-stocked cellar and brought forth the best of his cider vintage, and the anniversary of fifty years was toasted by the two heroes. ‡ A witness there of this vivid encounter of old age was a shy contrasted figure in the bloom of her girlhood, the Colonel's niece. To her cherished after-remembrance, the courtly Marquis, before he re-entered his coach,—“with his coat thrown back, his ugly benevolent kind old French face, with the small eyes beaming below the high reddish-brown wig,”—paid with a smile his Gallic “hommages” to the New England curtsy of Mistress Emily Steele.

Emily, then at school in Boston, was living in Belmont with her Aunt (Elizabeth Loring) Wellington, her mother's sister, and the wife of the veteran, Jeduthan. This great-hearted woman, the mother of fourteen children and step-children, the grandmother of scores, and the “Aunt Wellington” of innumerable kindred, for

* George Vanderbilt died (on shipboard, returning from Europe) before their marriage; but the Commodore gave Lavinia Hawley a life-annuity and always treated her as his daughter.

†Cf. Appendix.

‡ The glass goblet of that Lafayette occasion (with Col. Wellington's invitation to the Bunker Hill services in 1825) was still cherished in 1924 by the granddaughter of Jeduthan, Mrs. A. W. Griswold, of Belmont, aged ninety-two, who left it to the Historical Society of that town.

half a century—till her death in 1851—was the exuberant soul of hospitality at the ample and prosperous homestead in Belmont.*

EMILY STEELE—AN OLD LOVE LETTER

Here, in 1835, shortly before her marriage to Col. James McKay, Emily Steele wrote to him a letter, discovered in 1923, by their great-grandson, Robert Keith MacKaye (the writer's son), who found it in the secret drawer of an old inlaid writing-desk of Col. McKay, where it had lain unseen for nearly ninety years. In its old-time Jane Austen flavor, the following excerpts convey intimations of the personality of Steele MacKaye's mother. Post-marked "Boston, Ms. July 1, paid 25 cents," and sealed with a wafer, the letter is addressed to "James McKay Esqr., Buffalo, N. Y.":

"*Monday, June 27th, 1835.*—I sent you a letter this morning, and now commence another which I shall finish Wednesday. This is my fourth, and I have as yet received but one from you. . . . I devoted this morning in my room with my sewing, and after dinner took a walk in the woods. I'll assure you I enjoyed it very much, for I was visiting *you*; there was naught to interrupt my devotion, and I felt regret at leaving the spot, which seemed *sacred*. I should like to have spent the day, but knew I should be missed. . . . Later, we took the chaise and went to Cambridgeport for a ride. . . . This evening has been partly employed at the piano. Maria † and I have practised some together, and sometimes sing in the evening. She has been playing chip with Mr. Mead, her husband. . . . Farewell for to-night. I will leave all the room I can spare to answer the letter which I hope to receive to-morrow. Oh, how I wish I knew how you were employed this evening! Your affectionate Emily.

"*Tuesday evening.* Dear—I am *indeed* unhappy to-night. I have received no letter, and the disappointment has almost overwhelmed me. What *can* be the meaning of it? You expected to arrive at Buffalo Tuesday and promised to write immediately. It is now a week, and it only takes five days for a letter to come. What *must* I think, and how do you think I feel at the idea of anything serious happening to you? . . . I have looked forward to-day to Mr. Mead's return from the city with so much anxiety, and yet so *much* pleasure, and when I saw him coming my heart trembled and everything was dimmed before my eyes. I scarcely had strength to ask him for a letter; and when he told me there was none, and persisted in it, I felt so hurt that I could scarcely conceal my tears, and I left the room. I did not think

* "Aunt Wellington's" daughter, Adeline (Emily Steele's first cousin), married William Homer, of Belmont, uncle of Winslow Homer, the great marine painter. Cf. page i, 47; also photo of Wellington-Homer homestead, Chap. I.

† Her first cousin, Maria Wellington, who married Samuel Mead, of Belmont, in whose house Emily was married.

he told me true, and his trifling about a matter which *I* deemed of so much importance was what grieved me so. . . . Oh, I *cannot* but hope for the best, and trust that to-morrow will bring tidings that will compensate for all this night's sorrow. My heart is wearied. I am sure that I will never leave you again for my health, for the loss of your society is worse to me than the bitterest pain that the body can be visited with. . . . We have all been to Mrs. William Homer's * to spend the day. . . . Every one has seen our publishment in church and seems anxious to see me. We are two very important characters about here now. I have received endless invitations to visit far and near. . . .

"*Wednesday Evening* has arrived—and no letter! I will not attempt to express my sufferings at this third disappointment. It is now eight days since you expected to arrive in Buffalo. . . . I have every reason to believe that something serious has happened to prevent your writing; if not, you have not fulfilled your promise and have neglected me. Either conclusion is heart rending. Mr. Mead tries to hector me about it in every way. He says he has received one from you, but you directed him not to shew it to me, and a great many other stories he is continually manufacturing. . . . The Homers have both been here this evening, and he asked the first thing if they had got a letter for me, if not they must not come into the house, for I would not be civil to them if they had not. But it makes no difference to me what they say. I do not notice it at all. . . . If I am grieved here, I must smother my griefs, when a flood of tears might relieve the intensity of my sorrow, and I must appear in such a manner as not to excite remark, see company and go avising when others say the word, or frustrate all their plans and intended kindness, and perhaps offend. . . . I have *indeed* poured forth my sorrows to you in this letter, but do not let anything induce you to blame me. I pray once more that to-morrow evening will bring me a letter, but I shall spend a fearful and anxious day. . . . I pray constantly for your safety.—Your own and affectionate Emily.

"*Thursday Evening*. I had this ready to send this morning, and Mr. Mead went to Boston and left it on the desk. I was very much disappointed, but now I am very glad, for I have received a letter from you to-night, and have broken the seal of this to tell you how happy I am. . . . I am like a new creature, and only wish I could see you to tell you all I feel. I must beg you again to forgive me for all that you may think unreasonable in this letter. I see by yours that you wrote immediately, but I had no idea that it would take so long for one to get here. It seems you did not arrive as soon as you expected at Buffalo. . . . Oh, I wish I had more room. I could write forever. Farewell again! Emily."

In 1924, the daughter of the "William Homer" here mentioned—Adeline Wellington Homer (Mrs. Charles W. Griswold), of Belmont—wrote, in her ninety-second year:

* Cf. page i, 47.

"Sweet Emily Steele McKay! I remember her as very attractive in her manners and dress, gentle, with low, sweet voice, which her great granddaughter, Arvia MacKaye, has inherited. . . . For several years after her marriage to Colonel McKay, the two families corresponded and exchanged visits. Her mother, Aunt Sarah Loring Steele, from Buffalo, with her wonderful stories of the Indians in her western frontier home, came as a welcome guest, with her children. I am sure Emily's life must have been a happy one. Colonel McKay was very kind and wise in bringing up his children and gave them every advantage."

By Col. McKay's niece, Mrs. Elizabeth Burwell Merritt (of Tuckahoe, N. Y.), Emily Steele is described as "lovely, bright, humorous: like a picture in *Godey's Lady's Book*."

THE PATRIOTS' WAR: "BUFFALO CITY GUARDS—
JAS. MCKAY, COLONEL"

Col. McKay and his bride were married in the long drawing-room of the stately pillared Mead mansion, still standing in Belmont. As they drove away from the house, their chaise overturned at a sharp turn of the driveway, but they continued their journey unhurt, by stage-coach, to Buffalo.

There, at Black Rock, in 1837, the Colonel built for his wife a picturesque stone edifice on the Niagara river front.* Designed after an old castle of Scotland, in Norman Gothic style, it is still known as "The Castle," and has been occupied by successive commanders of the Federal troops, stationed there at Fort Porter. Carved on its cornices may yet be seen the Hand and Dagger escutcheon of Clan MacKaye. In its library, the Colonel's favourite haunt, were built among the books a series of little niches, holding busts of Shakespeare, Goethe, Mendelssohn, Bach, Chopin, Mozart, and other composers and poets, whose biographies he used to read aloud there to his family.

For nearly ninety years this romantic residence was a centre of charming hospitality and social functions. When at last, in 1926, the old fort passed from the Federal War Department, to make way for the great American-Canadian Peace Bridge across the Niagara River, alone of all the federal buildings "The Castle" was spared from demolition. On June 28, 1926, a Buffalo journal recorded:

"With the beginning of the Sesquicentennial celebration, the plaintive bugle notes of taps were sounded at the passing of old Fort

* In the photograph of "The Castle," in this chapter, taken in the summer of 1888, the standing figure is my brother, William Payson MacKaye; the seated is Frank Bartlett Steele, of Buffalo, grandson of Oliver Gray Steele.

Porter as an army post, while the colours slowly came down the flag-staff. . . . If ghosts walk, and secret passages are haunted by history's dead and gone, then there must be weird stirrings at the old Castle, most legended of all Buffalo houses, renowned as the birth-place of our famous playwright; for this enchanting mansion—which actually possesses a winding, secret stairway, and the tradition of a lost underground passage—will be used in future as a customs' inspector's office. . . . Outside, grey stone and battlements, inside there is a lovely, two-storied groined-arch entrance hall, with niched walls. The drawing-room—of imposing charm, with high, carved, white-marble mantelpiece—commands from its French windows a view of the riverhead, across symmetrical glimpses of the parade green.” *

When Col. McKay, however, built “The Castle” in 1837, the fortifications at Fort Porter (built 1841 to 1850) were not yet erected. The only military station then at Buffalo was comprised in the Poinsett Barracks, commanded by Col. Bankhead. In 1837 arose the “Patriots’ War,” a rebellion of brief duration against the British Government in Canada, which had many sympathisers in New York State, who proposed to cross the border into Canada near Niagara Falls to assist the “Canadian Patriots.” With this object, James McKay raised and organised a volunteer regiment, of which he was the Colonel.

An old colored print,† owned by the writer, shows the sabred Colonel with his artillerymen, in their quaint uniforms—their blue-bordered white flag centred with a brown, rampant buffalo and gold initials, “C. G.” Beneath the view of their barrack-yard is printed in small letters “From *Steele’s* press, Buffalo” and the large caption:

“BUFFALO CITY GUARDS,
37th Regiment N. Y. State Artillery—*James McKay*, Colonel.”

* In January, 1927, I learn through my cousin, Frank B. Steele, of Buffalo, that (since the above-mentioned events in June, 1926) “the Castle” again narrowly escaped destruction by order of Federal authorities, but has been definitely saved by transference to the jurisdiction of the City of Buffalo, thanks in chief to the public-spirited interest of Mr. Edward P. Lupfer, Engineer of the great Peace Bridge.—Now owned by the City, the Castle is soon to be moved a few rods on to municipal property, where it will be permanently preserved as a memorial building. In view of the public significances, local, national and international, set forth in this memoir (emphasized by Buffalo writers and citizens, in the opening pages of Chapter XXI), the biographer here records his earnest hope that the building in which Steele MacKaye was born may permanently hold some appropriate memento of him and his lifework, as well as of his father (once President Lincoln’s “Special Commissioner”), who designed and built the Castle.

† Reproduced as illustration in this chapter.

Thus, five years before the birth of James Steele McKay, this old print records the components of his name.

Besides "The Castle," where he spent his summers, Col. McKay built also in the town, for his winter residence, at different times, a house on Delaware Avenue and another on Pearl Street. In the latter were born his two daughters, Emily Benton (Dec. 26, 1838) and Sarah ("Saidie") Loring McKay (Oct. 19, 1840).

"THE CASTLE" AT BLACK ROCK:
BIRTH OF JAMES MORRISON STEELE MCKAY

On June 6, 1842, in "the Castle," at Black Rock, in a quaint little chamber under the arched roof, was born James Morrison Steele McKay. In after years, through an evolution of his name which discarded the "James" and never used the "Morrison," he became publicly known as "Steele MacKaye."

PART I

A Radical Fool

"You know that I am one of those foolish creatures who is constantly associating his own career with the idea of progress for mankind. This tendency is apparently in spite of myself. I constantly find myself, involuntarily, leaving the work which common sense would declare to be my proper occupation, and going heart and soul into something I am madly impelled to do, by a feeling that such work will have a more universal value than that which seems more practically conducive to my own personal profit.—I suppose that this overwhelming preponderance of instinctive forces is in reality the manifestation of that universal will in which we live." (p. 221.)

STEELE MACKAYE, 1874.

"In writing '*A Radical Fool*,' the idea I had in mind was that of the man who should be most practically akin to Christ, yet show him to be, to worldly eyes,—radically, a fool." (p. 222.)

STEELE MACKAYE, Feb. 21, 1874.

CHAPTER I

QUESTING

Childhood

1842-1856 *

HENRY CLAY AND THE KITTENS



THE EARLIEST INCIDENT OF RECORD IN the life of James Steele MacKaye is characteristically intrepid and quixotic. In charming miniature it presents him already plunged full-armed in the turbulent tides of his time and environment—the three-year-old hero of a comedy-melodrama, involving a mélange of outraged Muses, drowned kittens and a presidential candidate.

The Scene is the old Cataract House, Niagara Falls, in June of 1845: a hurly-burly of guests in top-hats and crinoline, crowding the porches and

lobby, momentarily expecting the great Kentuckian, Henry Clay, recent Whig candidate for the White House: among these, Colonel James McKay of Buffalo, with his wife and children, Emily, Saidie and Jimmy.† The Colonel has come to confer on business with his close friend, the Candidate.

The Scenario proceeds: Apart, in the almost deserted parlour, coiled in an angle of the fireplace, discovered—a litter of new-born kittens. Discovered, also—little Jimmy McKay, hero in green-and-blue tartan kiltie, rapt in the first transports of discovery. To him enters Villain—a skulking house-porter, with ash-scuttle, shovels kittens into scuttle and exit to kitchen-yard, followed close at heels by dumbfounded and incredulous Hero.

Discovered, in yard—a foot-bridge over a mill-race, with egress

* These years were spent by J. S. M. at Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Belmont, Mass., Lancaster, N. Y., Rochester, Tuckahoe, N. Y., New Haven, Albany, Brooklyn Heights.

† Col. McKay's oldest son, William Henry, at about this time, had run away to sea, though later he studied law and became a lawyer in New York City.

on the raging waters of Niagara. Oblivious of Hero's frantic pleas, Villain empties skuttle into an eddy of mill-race. Torn with pity and wrath, little Jimmy throws himself headlong, reaches over the edge of foot-bridge and rescues an armful of dripping, bedraggled kits. With these bulging his wet kiltie, he returns in triumph to enter the crowded hotel lobby, "as proud as any life-saver on the Jersey coast" to exhibit his living rescue to the plaudits of breathless onlookers. But alack for the rewards of heroism in miniature! To the wonder and tearful chagrin of little Jimmy, Breathless Onlookers are utterly oblivious of kilted Hero and kittens. Instead, their plaudits mount toward a mightier hero in top-hat and trousers, and their necks are craned for a glimpse of the great Kentucky Candidate, just arrived and gone upstairs to his room. So all the response to Jimmy's objurgating tale of kits rescued from the watery tomb is the reiterated name, inexplicably murmured from every one's lips: "Henry Clay!"

Burning with mystified rage, little Jimmy himself resolves to mount toward this unknown hope of outraged heroism. There aloft he will appeal to Ultimate Justice itself. So upstairs to the second floor he goes climbing and calling—"Henry Clay!"

Down the long, endless corridors of unopened rooms, clutching his bedraggled kits, he calls with bursting heart:

"Hen-ery! Hen-ery! Hen-ery Clay!"

But still the closed doors mock blankly, and he trudges on, sobbing it now:

"Hen-ery! Hen-ery! Hen-ery Clay!"

At last a door opens, and there looms a tall, lank figure in long dressing-gown, smiling quizzically down on little Jimmy—with smooth-creased, dark-browed features. Slowly the figure speaks, in deep, musical tones of old Kentucky oratory:

"Did you call me?"

Jimmy stares up at Ultimate Justice, awe-struck.

"Come in, my little man! What did you call me for?"

Jimmy stammers—holding out his forlorn and dripping vindication:

"Henry—here are my kittens!"

Forty-five years later, at the old Hoffman House, New York, recounting this earliest memory (reported in *The World* as "the best story of a passage-at-arms of the best-known wits of the town"), Steele MacKaye added in conclusion: "'Henry' and my

father often laughed over this afterwards, but never more heartily than the great Kentuckian did then."

THE DOG-GUIDE AND THE CIRCUS CHARIOTS

Another story of Jimmy and his animal pets, this time about a dog, was narrated by himself, at a dinner on the eve of the first festival-production of Steele MacKaye's play *Anarchy* in his home town, Buffalo, where the Buffalo Express reported (May 29, 1887):

"When I was a little lad of four or five," MacKaye said, "I had a dog, named Tip, and I was extraordinarily fond of him. One day there came to the city a circus, with the usual gorgeous street procession. This cavalcade fascinated me so powerfully that I followed the chariots for a long distance—so far, indeed, that at last I made the frightful discovery I was lost.

"Then my invention came to my rescue. I had led the dog by a string and, believing that Tip would know the way home, I determined to reverse the order of things and let Tip lead me. So I tied the cord about *my* neck, as the other end was tied about Tip's, and in this manner we set out for home.

"Sure enough, instinct was infallible and the dog guided me safely to the house. But just as we reached the gate I came to grief. Tip saw a cow in the yard and made a dash for her. I followed necessarily; and only the speedy exit of the cow saved me from untimely strangulation."

"THE BEAUTY OF THE WORLD"

Some few accounts of his childhood were published (like the foregoing), in Steele MacKaye's lifetime; others here given have been gathered from old letters or from personal memories of kindred and friends in after years. From "Johnson's Cottage, Buffalo," in 1845, his mother wrote to her sister, Lucy Ann (Steele) Faxon, in Clarksville, Tenn.:

"My youngsters are getting to be great witches. They are now playing and singing 'John Brown had a little Indian,' to the full extent of their voices, which does not produce the most delightful accompaniment to my letter writing. . . . There is to be a May Party this week on our front lawn. The Queen's Guards, a company of young boys about twelve years of age, are to wait upon the Queen, and they are to have the band from the Garrison. You see we are to have a gay time.

(Later, May 17): The May Party went off well. Our house was crowded. We had two splendid tables upon the piazza, filled with the most beautiful flowers that could be found. Our grounds look finely. Our children have a fine place to range and are all very healthy. . . . You would be surprised to see little Jimmy. He is as

fine, robust a little fellow as you ever saw, with cheeks as red as his sister Sarah's. We are quite proud of him. I call him—the Beauty of the World.”

“VERY FOND OF MOVING”

The May Queen, here referred to, was little Mary Wells, daughter of the head of Wells, Fargo & Company, of which Col. McKay was the “company” and the national organiser of that leading express company of the period. With expanding wealth as a lawyer and organiser, the Colonel became one of the “first citizens” of the growing town, and was generously lavish in his expenditures, private and public. One of the founders there of the Unitarian church, he built its first edifice. Besides erecting his military academy on Pearl Place, he also built three private residences (“The Castle,” “The Seminary,” “The Tuscany House” on Pearl St.) and occupied temporarily a fourth—“Johnson’s Cottage.” From that cottage his wife, Emily, wrote again to her sister, Lucy Ann (Feb. 18, 1845):

“My husband has been persuaded * to edit a new Whig paper called The Morning Daily Express. I think you would recognise him at once in the style. I opposed his taking this charge upon himself, as he appeared already to have as much business as he could possibly attend to, but you know that Mr. McKay is one who *never tires*. . . . You know, too, that we are *very fond of moving*. Our new house is built in the Tuscan style, with a tower which my beloved thinks he cannot dispense with. I suppose he calculates to shut me up in it at some future time, when I become more old and ugly than I am now. He has been very much annoyed by people asking what the tower is for, and the only way we could satisfy them was to tell them it was made to parch corn in!”

This “very fond of moving” became a lifetime adage of destiny for little Jimmy.

“HUNTIN’ FOR GOD”

In these prosperous and energetic surroundings of a frontier community, where nearly all the families were mutually acquainted, he was strictly tutored but fondly adored at home, and admired by the neighbours. At five, he was a promising chess-player. In his early teens (after moving east), he was an eager participant in his father’s favourite topics of history, art and philosophy, in which Herodotus, Michelangelo, Herbert Spencer, Tyndale and the

* One of the “persuaders” may have been Emily’s nephew, Charles Oliver Faxon, who was then a journalist in Buffalo. Cf. footnote on page i, 31.

Bible were fused in an ardent transcendentalism. But very early, in Buffalo, he took to his own childish ranges, scientific and mystic, nearly always with "mischievous" results. On one of these earliest ranges, the first church edifice, already mentioned, features in this reminiscence of him, dictated to me by his sister, Emily, in her old age (1916):

"Your father was a naughty little boy, you know. He was very mischievous. He was very original, too, and very wilful. He was always running away and frightening everybody to death. Once he ran away, and we couldn't find him for the longest time; and where do you think we found him at last? On top of the church steeple!

"How he ever got up there I don't know. Some workmen must have left a ladder, or something. My mother was terribly frightened, for to get him down again was ticklish and dangerous. But the neighbours came flocking to help, and at last he was rescued. He himself, though, wasn't a bit flustered. Indeed, he was quite astonished when Mother scolded him.

"What in the world, Jimmy, do you mean by climbing away up on that steeple? What were you doing up there?"

"Oh!" he answered, 'I was just huntin' for God!'"

This incident of the steeple probably occurred during some exterior painting or repairing of the church itself, which was built by Jimmy's father, who was one of the six founders of the First Unitarian Congregational Society of Buffalo, in 1832.*

"As a citizen of Buffalo (said an editorial on his death in 1888), Col. MacKaye was first in all the movements which led to the development of this half-Indian village into the third largest city of New York State. *He built the first Unitarian Church and the first public school.*"

In "the development of this half-Indian village," Col. McKay was not forgetful of the noble attributes inherent in that dark race of Seneca Indians whose ancient dominion there was being obliterated by the inflowing tide of the whites. The Chief † of the tribe at Black Rock (kinsman perhaps of that earlier chief, "Red Jacket"—"Sa-go-ye-wat-ha—whose portrait is preserved by the Buffalo Historical Society ‡) was a personal friend of the Colonel, my grandfather, who welcomed him often at "The Castle," where the Colonel engaged an artist to paint portraits of the Chief and his squaw, as a birthday gift to my grandmother. Thus little

* Cf. Appendix. † Cf. his portrait, in Ancestry chapter.

‡ Described by O. G. Steele: Buffalo Hist. Soc. Pub., 1880.

Jimmy was reared in a high regard and interest for the aboriginal Americans, which served him well in later dealings with them in his *Drama of Civilization*.*

Also, as a child, he acquired from his father an enthusiastic knowledge of telegraphy, which once served him as livelihood in a boyish escapade.† For Col. McKay's quick enterprise undertook very early the organising and extension of Samuel F. B. Morse's new invention of the telegraph (which had its first line between New York and Baltimore, in 1844), as is intimated by these words of his wife in a letter from Buffalo (May 16, 1847) to her sister, Lucy Faxon, in Clarksville, Tenn.:

"My husband is now in Montreal on telegraph business. As to your idea about telegraphing running down or dying away, you were never more mistaken in anything. It is growing more and more important. The new Canada line is overrun with business already."

"THAT JIMMY MCKAY!"

Jimmy's humanistic enthusiasms for electrical devices and Indians were evenly matched by his ardours for non-human comrades and their life-problems, as my Aunt Emily (his sister) suggests in this reminiscence of him:

"He was passionately fond of animals. He would go away and come back with every conceivable kind of animal—dogs, cats, snakes, turtles, frogs, chickens! He was a very little boy, of course, but he used to steal chickens and bring them home. His father used to punish him soundly, but he'd do the same thing right over again. . . . He was a very handsome child—people would turn and look at him in the street: they always did, all his life. He was always sketching and drawing—especially animals. He had a great gift for painting animals. He was both artistic and philosophic. I loved your father dearly. He was a fascinating boy—and man."

This passion for animals was intimately a part of his whole life. In his childhood it was the despair of his kindred, not only at home but on visits to distant relatives. In Tuckahoe, N. Y., on a visit to his Aunt Jane (McKay Burwell) he is reported to have tied the roosters down to make them lay. There, too, he "took wonderful sketches of the family."

Again, on visits with his mother to her Aunt Elizabeth, his great "Aunt Wellington" (née Elizabeth Loring), in Belmont, Mass.,

* Cf. page ii, 82. † Cf. page i, 60.



COL. JAMES (MORRISON) MCKAYE
(1805—1888)
From a photograph, about 1859.



EMILY STEELE (MCKAY)
(1807—1849)
From a miniature, painted on ivory, about 1835.

THE PARENTS OF STEELE MCKAYE



"THE CASTLE"—BIRTHPLACE OF STEELE MACKAYE

Built at Black Rock, Buffalo, N. Y., by Col. James McKay, 1837. Occupied by U. S. Commanders of Fort Porter, for about 75 years (footnote on page 35).



"BUFFALO CITY GUARDS, JAMES MCKAY, COLONEL" (with sword)

From a colored print (press of Oliver G. Steele, Buffalo), during "the Patriots' War," 1837 (page 36).

these distracting energies gave rise to an impromptu couplet, handed down in tradition through that (Wellington-Homer) branch of the family. Catching sight, from afar, of the incorrigible urchin scampering up Wellington Hill, one of his Great Aunt's family exclaimed to a protecting Providence:

*"Lord! What ever shall we do to-day?—
Here comes that Jimmy McKay!" **

WINSLOW HOMER AND "BILLY-GO-GIT"

Scampering with Jimmy over that same hill of many kindred was another young "incorrigible," later renowned as our foremost American marine painter—Winslow Homer. Adeline Wellington (Emily Steele's first cousin) had married William Homer, of Belmont, an uncle of Winslow, who then, as a small boy, slightly older than Jim Steele McKay, shared with Jim the old-time hospitality of that ample household which, in its last years, my wife (née Marion Homer Morse—my third cousin through this Belmont kinship) shared also as a little girl. There her mother, Mary Bartlett Homer, played with her second cousin, Jimmy (McKay), and her first cousin, Winslow (Homer).

As this family connection holds a not-elsewhere recorded background of memory which links in kinship the boyhood of the great sea-painter with that of my father, I am including here these following paragraphs, written for me by my wife out of her own recollections of later Belmont times:

"I remember Winslow Homer, in my childhood, as a great, gruff, red-faced, weather-beaten individual, who used to eye small me with to-my-mind evident dissatisfaction. This perennial impression doubtless arose from a grotesquely poignant episode that had befallen me at a family funeral in Belmont ('Cap'n Jim' Homer's, I think). On that awesome occasion, amid crowds of elderly, solemn kindred, I was consigned to a slippery, little horse-hair foot-stool, where I yearningly eyed the green-and-golden passing of my grandmother's smelling salts. At last, during a lull of the preacher's voice, I succeeded in capturing the gorgeous prize, and snuffed one catastrophic sniff—resulting in my spasmodic overthrow, wherein I encountered the pent and walk-the-plank stare of Cousin Winslow.

"That same congealing stare was recalled years later, by our delightfully genial Cornish neighbour, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, who married into the Homer family. On that first and only time he ever called

* Then pronounced to rhyme with "day." Of our branch of the clan in America, my father (in 1869) was the first to return to the older (original and perennial Scotch pronunciation—*Ki* (rhyming with "high"). Cf. page i, 131.

on Winslow Homer—so Saint-Gaudens related—his own sunny Provençal smiles were suddenly blasted by that deep-sea-fog gaze of Homer, before which Saint-Gaudens “backed out of the door”—never more to venture there.

“In the old Belmont home, on Wellington hill, I remember seeing sketches and drawings of Winslow Homer’s lying helter-skelter and disregarded, and it was there, years before, that he was soundly reprimanded, of a Sunday morning, on being discovered behind the barn, painting one of his best known pictures, ‘Making Hay,’ using as a model one of the homestead farmhands, whom he had inveigled away from morning service in the neighbouring old brown-steepled church. Indeed my aged Aunt Adeline, to her dying day at ninety-two, remained always sceptical about ‘that Winslow’ ever having scaled to the dizzy heights of world-renown. For my Grandmother Homer, as the wife of a ‘solid citizen,’ somewhat too hospitable of his wealth, was sorely tried by the then incorrigible tendency of ‘that Winslow’ branch of the Homer family to fall in the pit of impecuniosity, and by the equally incorrigible persistence of William, her husband, in pulling them out—his brother Charles being always in financial hot water. I remember my great-uncle Charles—the father of Winslow—as a pompous old white-haired gentleman, carrying a gold-headed cane. In his youth he was called ‘the Count,’ * in which ‘rôle’ we have an early daguerrotype of him, dashingly groomed in elaborate evening clothes, eye-glass in hand.

“In his boyhood, Winslow Homer—owing perhaps to his father’s precarious fortunes—was much at the house of my grandmother—the same who was exasperated into that impromptu couplet on ‘Jimmy McKay’; and no doubt, with two such impetuous, budding geniuses under her heels, she had her troubles. But from these William Homer *, my jovial grandfather, was sure to rescue her—and them! For all children were fascinated by my gay, tall, ruddy-cheeked grandfather; and I can imagine the small boys, Winslow and Jimmy, sitting on his knee (as I did, a generation later), absorbed by his fund of song and anecdote, grave and gay—his marvelous stories that ‘serialized’ sometimes for years, accompanied—pencil in hand—by his swift flow of rough, strong illustration, picturing the adventures of ‘Patty Proud,’ with their shuddersome finale, or the tale of ‘Billy-Go-Git’ as he sailed the Seven Seas, touching at every port and clime.

“Thus ‘along of Billy-Go-Git,’ that enchanting world-wanderer, unconsciously imbibing glorified glimpses of the cosmos—Winslow Homer, I have no doubt, in childhood drew in from his Uncle William much of his own love for the sea and for picturing it forth in rough power, as also Steele MacKaye may have imbibed childhood memories, which led him, years afterward, to write: ‘I am sure my ancestors must have lived for hundreds of years on the sea.’” †

* For some similar early tendencies in “the Count’s” scion, Winslow, compare (in this chapter) the photograph of Winslow Homer, here reproduced for the first time. For reference to “William Homer” in Emily Steele’s letter, cf. p. i, 34.

† Cf. page ii, 137.

In after years, also, Steele MacKaye renewed these boyhood relations with Winslow Homer during the Civil War, and in meetings with him and other artist friends, notably on an occasion when Winslow Homer, William M. Chase, J. Alden Weir, etc., joined him in doing honour to a fellow artist of the stage, in 1880.*

DEATH'S BRINK ON THE CASTLE TOWER

As in the Belmont tales of "Billy-Go-Git," restless curiosity and hazardous daring are the chief themes of Jim McKay's childish exploits, in which his sister Saidie—a venturesome twin spirit—often joined. With her, on Goat Island, balanced on one foot above the verge of Niagara, he delighted to terrify their staid sister, Emily. With a boy classmate ("at Drew's or Fay's school"), Adrian R. Root—who later became Captain of Company "D," Buffalo City Guards—he watched the building of Fort Porter, adventuring there among the excavations on imaginary war campaigns; or, escaping from church with his cousin, Charles Gould Steele,† he conjured spooks in the churchyard. But most thrillingly romantic as he himself used to narrate it awesomely to his own children, was his finger-breadth escape from death on the tower of his home "The Castle." Though the old ivy-grown castle itself still stands, the high battlemented tower has long since vanished. In it were small windows, with jutting ledges of stone.

From one of these windows, at night-fall, in about his seventh year, little Jimmy climbed out, all alone, aiming to re-enter the tower by the adjoining window. Sticking fly-wise to the sheer wall with his body, and clutching the stone juts with both hands, he was wriggling slowly for a side foothold, when he suddenly slipped, barely catching himself on the window ledge. There he hung dangling in air.

From the dimness he screamed and called, but no one heard. Saving his breath then, he struggled to chin himself above the ledge, but the exertion only weakened his clutch. Now he hung motionless above destruction—he screamed and waited—his fingers grew numb. He screamed again and waited—waited. Very slowly his numb hands were slipping—slipping—slipping off! One more choking cry—then he felt his wrists gripped from above, his body jerked upwards, dragged in through the window—and he lay sobbing in the arms of his governess. (More than once in imagina-

* Cf. page i, 352.

† Son of Oliver Gray Steele, and father of Frank Bartlett Steele, of Buffalo.

tion I have lived through that quivering moment, since my father etched it, as with fire, on a bedtime hour of my own childhood!)

THE SPIRIT WALTZ

At about that time, his mother had entered upon a year of illness, which was to terminate her life. During this year Jimmy was sent away to Tuckahoe, N. Y., on another visit to his Aunt Jane, who resided in an old stone house (still standing) high on a hill amid spacious grounds and shade trees.

The memory of his mother was always poignantly dear to him. All ties with her he held sacred. In 1890 he wrote to his wife: "There is something inexpressibly precious to me about the relatives of my mother." She was a gifted musician, and played with deep feeling. Especially one old-fashioned piece which she used to play appealed to her son. It was called "The Spirit Waltz." (He himself taught it to me in my boyhood.) It was the last music he remembered her playing—a pensive, eerie tune, which haunted his childish remembrance during the homesick hours of his exile in Tuckahoe.

There, on the evening of June 28, 1849, a gay party was being held by his older cousins, so that Jimmy had been sent to bed early. About seven o'clock the festivity was proceeding merrily, when suddenly the door burst open, and into the midst of the startled guests rushed little Jimmy in his nightgown, sobbing hysterically and calling his mother's name.

"Where is she?" he cried.

Calming him, his aunt and cousins told him his mother was not there, but far away in Buffalo. But through tears he told them that he had just seen her upstairs. He had waked up, he said, and seen his mother bending over him. She was weeping, but called him by name; then she took him out of his crib and led him to the head of the stairs, kissed him—and disappeared.

"Where is she gone?" he cried again. But they told him he had been dreaming, soothed him and led him back to bed. A few days later word came, by letter, that his mother had died at seven o'clock on the evening of June 28th.

"In the summer of 1875," my brother, Arthur, has written me, "at Brattleboro, Vermont, I was sleeping in a cot in Father's room. I was awakened by a great cry. I saw Father sitting up in bed, which was flooded with moonlight, holding out his arms. I called to him, and he then told me that his mother had appeared to him at the foot

of the bed, looking at him sorrowfully. I was frightened, but he was not."

These incidents are here recounted, because the deep impression of their phenomena, never erased from his mind, led him in after years to give considerable time to investigations of occultism (with Robert Dale Owen, Frank B. Carpenter, Charles Foster, the medium, and others). In these investigations, though he was never a confirmed spiritualist, his attitude was earnestly open-minded. Though he adored music, he was not himself a musician. The only piece he ever played was "The Spirit Waltz," which he learned from his mother.

A "MIDLAND WANDERER"

With his mother's death there commenced for him, at the age of seven, an era of *Wander-Jahre*, during which he passed from the care of various relatives to tutelage at home, or at local school, and to study in eastern boarding-schools. High strung and passionately fond of home, he had for these schools a poignant aversion which, years later, made him resolve never to send away his own children to board at school lest they suffer as he had done. Certain friendships, however, for his schoolmates he always held dear. Among these schoolboy friends was a Percy Wallace, after whom he named one of his sons.

During the three months which followed his mother's death his big-hearted Aunt Lucy Faxon left her own brood of offspring in Tennessee and came, by stage from Clarksville, to mother him on his return to Buffalo from Tuckahoe. Soon after that, he and his sisters were sent to New Haven to stay with their "Aunt Mary Hotchkiss,"* whose household comprised somewhat dour Presbyterian kindred. There the three children received this letter from their father, dated "Buffalo, May 24, 1850":

"My very dear children, Emily, Sarah and Jimmy:

"I have just arrived home this day. And now you see, my dear children, the first thing I do, is to write you. I shall be very lonesome, doubtless, without my little flock. But I comfort myself with the thought that you are better off than you could be here, and that you are all improving and are quite happy. I hope also you will be very attentive to your studies, for you know how anxious I am that you should grow up intelligent and good. Besides, I am very impatient to have you with me. . . . Dear little James must make haste and learn to write, so as to be able to write me as often as he pleases. . . .

* Cf. Appendix.

I intend soon to come and see you again. In the meantime, above all things love one another. And dear Emily and Sarah, you must both take good care of your little brother. Be kind also to your cousins and obedient to your Aunt Mary. . . . Write me good long letters and tell me everything. You know I love you very dearly, and wish to know all that is in your hearts—all your joys and all your sorrows. Believe me Your devoted father—J. McKay."

In New Haven, also, Jimmy's sisters, Emily and Saidie, received from their "Auntie Faxon" this letter, dated from Clarksville, Tenn., June 8, 1850:

"My dear little nieces: I hope you are pleased with your new home and are making your Aunt happy by your *quiet obedience* and *rapid improvement*. Your example, Emily, is very important to the happiness of that dear little motherless Jimmy, the dear little fellow deprived of his mother at such a tender age. . . . I know Mrs. Hotchkiss will do everything to make you happy, but she will of course insist upon *Jimmy's being obedient*, so that you must encourage him *to obey*."

"To obey," however, was the least of little Jimmy's inclinations. "Nonconformity" was in his blood. So, like the ancestral *Mac-Aoidh*, he took up his ancient heritage of becoming a "midland wanderer"; and soon after in "historical twilight" he is vaguely discerned (about 1851) as a boy at Albany,* in this vista of family tradition:

"In Albany, he used to bring home all sorts of stray dogs. His father forbade this, but whenever he found some particularly disreputable hungry cur, he would smuggle it into the backyard to feed it. As a result he received many a thrashing from his father. Here, too, he was forbidden to go to the railroad yards. Nevertheless he went and one day was struck by a switch engine. His right arm was injured and he was helped home by a boy playmate."

At about this period his father, active in extending the organization of express and telegraph companies, moved to the east. There he became actively associated with William Lloyd Garrison and other leaders of the rising Abolition movement, as well as—in the interests of an enthusiastic art patron—with W. M. Hunt, J. Q. A. Ward and other painters and sculptors.

* At Albany, he was probably on vacation from his Brooklyn Heights home, perhaps visiting his great uncle, Daniel Steele, who was a book publisher in Albany.

NEWPORT: ARTISTS AND WRITERS: HIGGINSON,
LONGFELLOW, JAMES, ETC.

These associations drew him to the colony of artists and writers at Newport, Rhode Island, where he built "a brown Gothic cottage in Kay Street." There, during many seasons of summer residence, he formed warm friendships with Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Henry James, Sr., and there, in 1852, he first became friends with Henry W. Longfellow and Julia Ward Howe, who were spending that summer at the old Cliff House. There also, in 1853, he married Miss Maria Ellery Goodwin, of Plymouth, Mass.,* with whom, soon after, he made his winter home in the old, stately residential quiet of Brooklyn Heights, at 60 Pierrepont St. (1854-'56), moving in 1857-'58 to Remsen Street (modern number 137), near Clinton Street. In New York (1853), he established his office, as president of the United States Express Company, at 82 Broadway, where he had frequent dealings in the Steamship business with Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, whose son George was engaged to Col. McKay's niece, Lavinia (Hawley).

About 1855 or '56, in order to avoid an annoying confusion in his mail, often missent to another James McKay (engaged in a truck-driving branch of "express" business, quite different from the Colonel's national express interests)—a not over-welcome neighbour who had moved next door to him on Remsen Street, Brooklyn—Col. McKay changed the spelling of his last name by adding to it an "e," and henceforth signed himself, "J. McKaye."†

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS: S. F. B. MORSE; LANCASTER, N. Y.: PLUMBOTTOM
CREEK: THE ART OF "RUNNING AWAY"

In New York, through his friend, Samuel F. B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph, Col. McKaye became one of the financial patrons of the Academy of Design, of which Morse was the first president. He endowed also a scholarship at the Art Student's League. In Brooklyn he started the second Unitarian Church, installing as its first minister Samuel Longfellow, brother of the poet, paying personally the minister's salary. There the duration of Samuel Longfellow's pastorate—April, 1853, to June, 1860—

* Cf. Appendix.

† This signature the Colonel used till 1885, when once more he changed the spelling, this time to "MacKaye," in order to conform to that which his son had already adopted in 1869. Cf. Name chart in Prologue.

According to family tradition, another reason why the Colonel added (in 1855-1856) the "e" to his name was that, being ardently "straight Scotch" in his bias, he desired to distinguish his particular "brew" of the clan from the Scotch-Irish strain which had settled, rather thickly, in Brooklyn.

almost exactly corresponds to the duration of Col. McKaye's residence in Brooklyn (1853-'59). In New York Col. McKaye was also one of the founders (1855) of Dr. H. W. Bellows' "All Soul's" Unitarian Church, still functioning at Twentieth Street and Fourth Ave.

On coming to Brooklyn, little Jimmy Steele McKay was fascinated by the possession of his first vegetable garden, where he plucked up beans and peas he had planted "to find out exactly how they grew." It was a different garden from that described by Ernest Poole in his novel, *The Harbour*, depicting his childhood home in Brooklyn Heights. Yet the description there given may well have tallied with Jimmy's own memories:

"From our narrow brownstone house on the Heights, I looked down from our back windows upon a harbour that to me was strange and terrible. I was glad that our house was up so high. Its front was on a sedate old street, and within it everything felt safe. But from the porch at the back you went three steps down to a long narrow garden, and if you peered through the ivy-covered bars of the fence, you could see a shivery distance straight down through the air to the street below."

Dating from his days by the harbours of New York and Newport, all his life my father was an ardent lover of the sea, a deft sailor and yachtsman. But though, at this time, nominally he made his home in Brooklyn Heights, the "Wander Years" of his childhood had not in reality ceased, for—after two or three years of school* in Brooklyn—he was sent away to boarding-school, or to visit relatives. In the summer of 1855, his father and family went abroad with the family of Augustus Brown, father of Walston Brown, the Wall Street banker, with whose sister, Augusta, Jimmy's sisters remained at school in Paris. On their departure, Jimmy went again to stay with his Aunt Jane (McKay Burwell), this time at her country house in Lancaster, near Buffalo, New York.

Here, on several occasions, he perfected his romantic fine art of "running away," in one instance very courteously informing his

* In the Philadelphia Press, Oct. 12, 1884, a journalist named Howard wrote: "I first knew MacKaye when we were little boys together and went to school in Brooklyn Heights. His father, a Scotchman, was one of our foremost citizens, practical, sagacious, and very proud of his son. When a lad, 'Jim McKay' was plump and pleasing. He was restless in play, full of energy and life, a thoroughly good comrade, but there was nothing peculiar or striking in his personal appearance. Grown to manhood as 'Steele MacKaye'—his thick hair black and curly, his eye full of fire—he was absolutely transmogrified."

At this old Colonial homestead of their "Aunt Wellington", amid Homer-Loring-Steele kindred and connections, young Winslow Homer (future marine artist) and "Jimmy" Steele MacKaye (future theater artist) foregathered in their boyhood as "incorrigible urchins" (pages 47-48).



WINSLOW HOMER—About 1863
(From a rare, unpublished photograph).



WELLINGTON HOMESTEAD

Wellington Hill, Belmont, Mass. From a very early photograph. Note, at left, ladies in hooped skirts on lawn; at right—oxen and teamster.
(Page 32.)



AGED ABOUT FOUR
From a daguerreotype.



AGED ABOUT SIX
*From an oil portrait, about 1848, by
Bass Oles (1793—1859).*



AGED ABOUT TWELVE
From a daguerreotype.

THREE PORTRAITS OF "JIMMY" STEELE MACKAYE, IN HIS CHILDHOOD

Aunt *before* the event: "Of course, Aunt Jennie, I wouldn't dream of going away without first calling to see you personally." Here, too, at the age of thirteen, occurred a boyish adventure revealing—already signally developed—those special gifts and ambitions which afterwards were to direct his life work to the theatre.

"I WANTED TO PROVE IT TO MYSELF"

In his Aunt Jane's house he had a little front room, looking out across the village street upon a charming vista of Plumbottom Creek. This room he had stocked with a variety of boyish pillage: hornet-nests, beetles, snails and crabs from the river banks, and cookies, "stolen through the pantry window, with the connivance of his friend, the cook, and kept in a locked box for disbursement to special intimates." Among the fondest of these intimates was his little first-cousin, Millicent Alling (daughter of his Aunt Sarah), then aged ten. She, too, was visiting her Aunt Jane from her home in Rochester, whence—from the same old mansion on South Fitzhugh Street, which has shown hospitality to four generations of our family—she has written me this account of her cousin Jimmy, nearly seventy years after their first meeting:

"Your father as a young lad was adorable. I first remember him when he was thirteen years old, at Lancaster, N. Y. There, one autumn day, we started to go nutting, he and several Lancaster boys and I. Leaving the main street, we let down some bars and went down a lane toward the woods. Half way down, these country boys began to taunt Jim McKay, who had long curly hair and, city-fashion, wore 'round-about's' buttoned up tight to the collar. Boasting their own superior knowledge of squirrels and woodchucks, the whole group guyed him as a 'city boy,' and a 'coward.' For a little while he stood their taunts. Then with eloquence he gave them 'fair warning' to stop, but they just laughed and continued their jeering. At that, swinging his arms, he stripped off his 'round-about's' and cried out, 'I'll thrash you all!' In a wild rage he flew at them; kicked, thrashed and routed the whole party; so that day we didn't get any nuts.

"I went home with him alone. He himself had torn clothes and a black eye, results of the fierce battle, but he returned as a conqueror. He had shown what a 'city boy' could do. I remember he told Aunt Jennie he had 'slain the enemy!' But before long tidings began to pour in upon Aunt Jennie from her neighbours, the mothers of the boys, telling how their sons had black eyes, torn clothes and bloody noses—how most of them were in bed, and would never again be allowed to play with that Jim McKay.

"Of course, his aunt was inclined to take her nephew's part, but she thought it wise to retire him from the public gaze for a time. So, the next day being Sunday, she locked him in his room while the

family all went to church: all but me. I pleaded a pain and stayed behind to console him, for I considered him a much-abused hero. From below in the yard I threw apples into his window but, after satisfying his appetite, he said he would rest a little. Soon he called me to come into the house and to look through the keyhole. So I peeped through. To my horror, I saw he had been taken terribly sick and was foaming at the mouth. He was sitting in a chair, with a pillow behind his head and his face covered with foam. You can imagine how frightened I was! In a very faint voice, he said: 'Tell Aunt Jennie to come to me as soon as she enters the house. I think I am dying.'

"You may be sure I ran down the street to meet her, and she lost no time, and very soon the doctor arrived. Meantime she got him into bed, bathed his face and anxiously tended him. After a careful examination, the doctor found nothing alarming: a little nervous excitement from the battle of the day before; advised nourishing food and fresh air. Later in the day he pleaded that the room was stuffy and was allowed to dress and go outdoors. I went with him, as he was still very feeble. Slowly and quietly we walked down to the orchard, but the instant we were out of sight, suddenly—to my terrified astonishment—he began to turn somersaults and to stand on his head, and clambering up a tree he cried out rapturously:

"'Soap! It was only soap! I fooled 'em all. I wanted to *prove* it!'

"'Prove *what*, Jimmy—for heaven's sake?'

"'That I can *act*! Some day I will be a great actor. I wanted to prove it to myself, and *now I know it*!'

"Then he told me further how he planned to be a foremost actor when he became a man, and how he had used soap to make Aunt Jennie believe he was foaming at the mouth. (Indeed his make-believe had wholly fooled her, the doctor and all of us.) Then he gleefully jumped down from the tree—and gorged himself on ripe apples!"

Eighteen years later, when he was acting in London, the critic of *The Spectator* wrote: *

"Mr. MacKaye's *Hamlet* is by far the best *Hamlet* of our time. Mr. MacKaye has real genius."

In the interval, though there were to be many groping steps and blind alleys, the light of a beckoning goal from *within* burned steadily brighter, for he had declared inwardly: "*I wanted to prove it to myself—and now I know it!*"

With that early test and determination the era of his childhood ends.

* Cf. page i, 198.

CHAPTER II

NON-CONFORMITY

Boyhood

1856-1858 *

CORNWALL COLONY: N. P. WILLIS, FANNY FERN, PARTON, E. P. ROE

JIM MCKAY'S INSTINCTIVE LEANING TOWARD THE LIFE OF AN artist and actor contrasted somewhat strangely with the decision which his father had made for him to pursue the career of a soldier. In conformity with his own training, "military, scientific and literary," at Norwich, Vermont, the Colonel had decided to send his son to West Point. To this end he selected a place of training, in the midst of a New York literary coterie, near West Point, at Cornwall-on-Hudson—Roe's Military Academy,† then a flourishing preparatory school for the government service. The principal was the Rev. Dr. Alfred W. Roe, an elder brother of Rev. E. P. Roe, the novelist, who was then a lad of nineteen, five years older than Jim. The site of the school was adjacent to "Idlewild," the estate of Nathaniel Parker Willis, poet, journalist, dramatist, publisher and litterateur.

"Idlewild," during the Eighteen Fifties, was the centre of a growing colony of arts and letters, which had its origins in "literary emigrants" from the region of Portland, Maine, the birth-place of Willis himself, of the Abbotts, Rev. Jacob Abbott (author of the Rollo books) and his author-minister brother, John Stevens Abbott, respectively the father and the uncle of Rev. Lyman Abbott, a kinsman of whom was a teacher of Jim McKay in the Roe Academy. Probably through New England Payson kinship, N. P. Willis and his sister, Sarah Payson Willis, had settled near the Roe family at Newburgh, where the author, Edward Payson Roe, was born, at New Windsor, in that township.

Of this literary colony, though N. P. Willis, poet-editor of *The Mirror* (on which Edgar Poe had been his assistant) was a New York celebrity, yet his sister, Sarah, under her *nom de plume* of *Fanny Fern*, was then by far the "best seller." Styled in her biography as "the most popular American writer of the day," Fanny Fern, in 1855, was commissioned by Robert Bonner,

* During these years J. S. M. was at Cornwall-on-Hudson, Catskill, Hastings, N. Y., Albany, Rochester, Brooklyn Heights, Newport.

† For further data concerning the Roe School cf. Appendix.

editor of the New York Ledger, to write stories exclusively for that journal. In announcement of this literary "scoop," Bonner published an advertisement which filled eight solid pages of the New York Herald. Bonner himself, Irish sportsman and horse-racer—owner of the famous "two-forty on a plank road" *Maud S.*—advertised further "scoops" for his Ledger, in single purchase-fees of \$3,000 for one poem from Longfellow, \$5,000 for another from Tennyson, and \$30,000 to Henry Ward Beecher for his novel, *Norwood*. Other contributors were Edward Everett, W. C. Bryant and James Parton, the American biographer and historian.

In 1885, Parton had published his *Life of Horace Greeley* and was gathering material for his *Life of Andrew Jackson*. As a friend of both Greeley and Jackson, Col. McKay may have assisted these researches, and perhaps through that connection may have brought to Cornwall his son, Jim, who was just entering the Roe Academy in '56, when James Parton was being married to Fanny Fern, on the adjoining grounds of her brother, N. P. Willis. Rambling there with his sketch-book on the paths of "Idlewild"—where he recalled, years later, his romantic sensations as a boy, listening to "the cannon of West Point reverberating among the lonely hills"—Jimmy may have encountered, and furtively drawn, this literary bride and groom gathering "Fresh Ferns" for the press; or there he may have pencilled the poet-laird of the estate, Nathaniel P., himself, posed with dandified cane on a jutting ledge of the Hudson, little fancying then that, seventy years later, two dramas by the laird and Jimmy (Willis's *Tortosa* and MacKaye's *Hazel Kirke*) would be studied by schoolboys-to-be, in Prof. Arthur H. Quinn's anthology of *Representative American Plays*.

ROE'S MILITARY SCHOOL: THE STUB-TOE CADETS

In his own book studies at Roe's Military Academy, for two years, Jim took high rank, but in the stricter regimen of military observances his high spirits were constantly devising schemes of mischievous "non-conformity."

It happened that a special pride of the school authorities (and a special aversion of his own) was the parade march which the "prep"-cadets were trained to perform with exact precision, in passing on Sunday mornings from dormitory to chapel along an extensive board-walk constructed of short parallel planks. So it befell, in one of his inspirations of misrule, that young McKaye called his fellow "preps" together for secret conference on a

Saturday evening. In the mysterious twilight of their meeting place, he conjured all his eloquence and transfixed their imaginations with the horrid doom which would inexorably befall any boy who permitted the instep of his foot to span the space-intervals between the planks of the board-walk. In brief, henceforth no boy must step on a crack, or the Devil would catch him.

That night, this dark seed of superstition sprouted in uneasy slumbers. As a consequence, the next morning, in awful presence of visiting officers from West Point, the parade march from dormitory to chapel became a rout of panic and pandemonium. Trying dreadfully to avoid a thousand parallel cracks, no foot of any cadet kept step with his fellow's. The boys sprawled, hitched and tiptoed in their wild endeavours to escape the Devil's Luck. Thus, ignominiously, inexplicably, the proud glory of the school's meticulous march-step was shattered in stub-toe confusion. No explanation of this sudden blight of Sabbath good form was forthcoming; but, after that, official suspicion centred in the dancing eyes of a red-cheeked cadet with dark-curling hair.

THE INK-BOTTLE OF IRE

As a foil to "hell-and-damnation" sermons by Rev. Dr. Roe, at chapel, the same cadet would smuggle into his pew a favourite volume, his geometry. With eager zest for his studies, his classroom work was progressing brilliantly. Several competent statements report that, at the age of fourteen, he passed the West Point examinations with what was then the highest standing yet attained. Whether these examinations took place at Cornwall, or (more probably) elsewhere, is uncertain, for his career as a Cornwall cadet ended abruptly with another insurgent adventure.

One day in classroom, under régime of Dr. Roe's assistant, Mr. Abbott, in response to an answered inquiry, his teacher unjustly accused him of having told a lie. Very quick to ire at injustice, he retaliated by seizing up his ink-bottle from his desk and hurling it at the schoolmaster's head. Narrowly missing its goal, the ink-bottle burst against the blackboard, spattering the features and vestments of authority. In consequence, he was locked in the school guard-room for insubordination. There, being the only occupant, he devised his counter-action alone.

The room was located in a high structure. Its one window, looking toward the Hudson River, opened several stories above the ground. Though unbarred, the height was too great for escape

by jumping. After midnight, however, Jim effected an alternative, in keeping with the ancient precedents of romantic literature. Tearing up the sheets of his bed, he made of the strands a cloth cable, tied it to the bedstead, let down the cable outside, and slid down it hand-over-hand till he dropped from the end safely to the ground. In the darkness he hurried to the river, pushed out on the water in a canoe, paddled over and reached the east bank. There, putting his hat and coat in the bottom of the canoe, he shoved the canoe out on the stream. The remainder of that night he spent in a railroad shed. In his trousers pocket was a silver half dollar. During three days he lived on crackers and dried herring, while making his way on foot to Albany.

"TICKETS, SIR?"

There he won the good graces of the railroad agent (whom he may have known in earlier visits to the Albany switch yards), and obtained a job as chore-boy in the station, sweeping it and running errands. Soon he made known to the telegrapher his knowledge of the Morse code, and within a month he was assistant in the ticket-office, helping to sell tickets and to send telegrams, all unbeknown to the President of the telegraph company—his father.

Meantime the canoe, with his hat and coat in it, had been found and had performed his boyish purpose of defiance. For weeks of anxious suspense, his father and the school authorities had been searching vainly for the lost boy. One day, with the hope of finding him in his old home-town of Buffalo, his older brother, William, was despatched thither from New York by his father. Changing cars at Albany, William hurried to the ticket-office window.

"Tickets, Sir?—How many?—West bound?"

"Yes; one ticket to Buffalo. Quick—my train's waiting. Hurry, boy!"

But the laughing eyes of the ticket-boy altered his tone.

"Great Scott!" William's gaze sharpened. "No, not west-bound: I mean *south* bound. I'll thank you for *two* tickets to New York. Just when is *our* train due, Jimmy?"

Then the future *Hamlet* toyed with his *Polonius*.

"It's waiting now, Bill—don't you see it?—on that track over there! Just wait a second and I'll join you."

But while William *Polonius* stood waiting an interminable "second," *Hamlet* Jimmy had slipped out a back door of the office,

dodged through the crowd into the west bound train, and was soon speeding, himself, toward Buffalo.

THE WILD QUARRY CAPTURED

Discovery of his dupe, exasperation, explanations to the ticket-agent, a telegram despatched to Utica, a way-station—these counter moves on the part of William brought back at last his wild quarry, Jim, in the leash of a railroad custodian. Wild now indeed, no longer laughing, but dumbly chafing at his capture—back to Brooklyn Heights he was led to paternal roof and retribution: omens in the past of a stern rod, handed down from ancient Scotland and the Old Testament.

The front door bell is rung. The servant opens. Jim waits in the hall—a heart-rending ordeal. The tiptoe servant returns.

“The Colonel will see you in his library.”

Up the great staircase alone, one flight, to a closed door, front. He pauses, gulping great breaths of defiance:

“Never—*never* will I knuckle to him!”

He knocks. A deep voice: “Come in!” He enters, closing quickly the door.

Against the long light of the tapestried window, gazing outdoors, stands a straight, six-foot figure—erect, dynamic, elegantly grand, his regal-poised head heavily grey-haired. Even his back is eloquent of urbane authority.

Against the dark-panelled door, with arms tense folded, stands the untamed scion—vivid, picturesque, gracefully superb, his long “raven locks” tossed back from the fine brow and strong, eager features of youth: “the beauty of the world” grown adolescent.

Neither stirs. The bust of Cæsar Augustus stares with marble eyes. The silence grows electric.

“Never!”—“Never!” throb the heart-beats.

At last, by the window, great shoulders begin to heave. Then, instant, the tall figure turns—arms thrown wide—with a deep, thrilling cry: “My son!”

“Father!”

The wild quarry leaps home!

Gripped to his father’s bursting heart, he clings in tumultuous affection, sobbing, reconciled—tamed by a gesture of tenderness to a compliance which no rod of iron could have compelled.

“J. MCKAYE IN ACCOUNT WITH HIMSELF”

In some of the foregoing anecdotes we have seen the quick-

mettled and recalcitrant boy defiant of outward authority. Through the earliest of his preserved note-books we may now glimpse the inner world of this lad of fourteen, in a self-communion imparted to pages intended for no eye but his own. The note-book is headed: "*J. McKaye in account with himself, 1856.*" Here the incipient artist-philosopher, yearning for a far synthesis of truth, reveals himself in these boyhood meditations:

"*Utility in Nature:* As the currents of our being flow toward the sea of eternity, we should prepare ourselves for the higher school of knowledge by learning elementary lessons in the pantomimic language of the leaves, and in the silent language of the clouds as they pass over our stream of life, teaching us the philosophy of eternity, the use of delight."

"*Words:* Being sure that the only true happiness is of God, I hunger after words to express my love, but all I find are lean and barren. I cannot trust the revelation of my love to them, they would conceal it the more with their rough and ugly costumes. Let my action speak. Action is eloquence, achievement is command."

"*Moral Principle in the Microscope:* Open your eyes to the fact that Religion is first, Art next, Science last. That power which gives life to the universe and prevents harm to any of its members, is moral principle, the principle of infinite and perfect justice, revealed as intensely in motion in the organic life of the water-insect, discovered only by the microscope, as in the harmonious action of all the infinite planets upon one another."

"*What is Death, and why should we fear it?* When does the soul light on the truth? When it attempts to consider anything in conjunction with the body, plainly it is then led astray by it. Must it not then be by reasoning, if at all, that any of the things that exist in pure truth become known to it? . . . But does not purification consist in this: in separating as much as possible the soul from the body, and accustoming itself to gather and collect itself, by itself, on all sides apart from the body, and to dwell as far as it can, both now and hereafter, alone by itself—delivered, as it were, from the shackles of the body? . . . *That*, then, is called death—that deliverance and separation of the soul from the body. But those who pursue wisdom rightly are especially and alone desirous to be delivered; and this is the very study of wisdom-seekers—the deliverance and separation of the soul from the body. . . . In reality, then, those who seek God rightly study to die, and to them of all men death is least formidable."

In this same notebook, with addresses in Cornwall and Catskill *—after Algebra examples, compositions and exercises in French—

* Summer visits of his boyhood were spent in the Catskill Mountains, at Rochester, N. Y. (his aunt Sarah McKay Alling's), at Hastings, N. Y. (Charles Loring Brace's—a cousin, through Loring descent), and by the Hudson river, where he went sailing and fishing.



JOHN BROWN
of Ossawatimie.

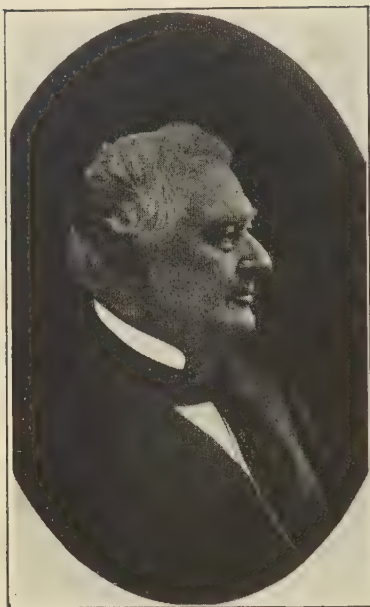


RALPH WALDO EMERSON
(From a rare photograph, taken in London.)

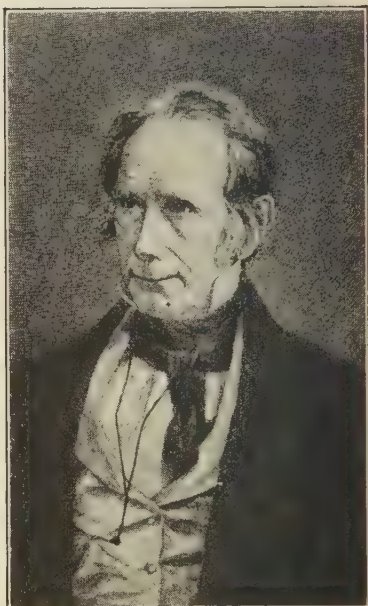
The ideals of these pioneering leaders (associated, in "Abolition" and "Transcendentalism" with his father's career) were dominant influences upon the boyhood and youth of Steele MacKaye (index).



WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON
Abolitionist Leader.



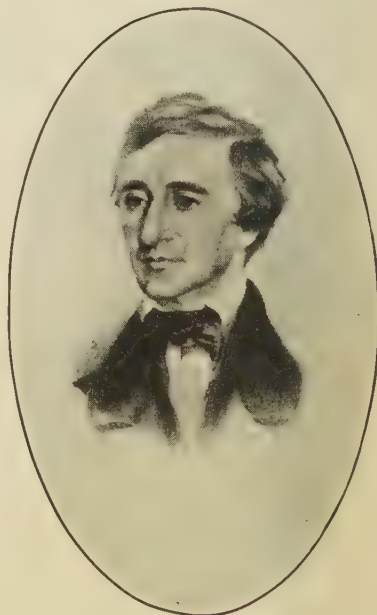
MILLARD FILLMORE
President of the United States
(1850—1853).



HENRY CLAY
Statesman.



NATHANIEL P. WILLIS
Poet-Editor-Dramatist.



HENRY D. THOREAU
Author Naturalist.

With these Americans were connected early associations of Colonel McKaye (law-partner of Fillmore) and of his son, James Steele McKaye (Cf. index).

is a cash account, quoted in the footnote.* These November (1856) expenditures from his father's allowance were probably concerned with purchases for his studio in New York, to carry on his painting work, which was now becoming an earnest passion of his life. Another passion was his zeal for Abolition. In August, 1856, John Brown of Ossawatamie had won his renowned victory over the band of pro-slavery Missourians who had invaded Kansas. In November, Jimmy's itemized mite of tribute, *For John Brown*, gives inkling of the awful storm which had already begun to darken the nation, to burst four years later in civil war.

These glimpses of him appear to represent an interim of comparative laxity from schoolboy studies, after his prodigal return from the Albany ticket-office.† This laxity, however, was soon to stiffen into a regimen of strict home tutelage (listed in the same notebook), probably contributing to a nervous breakdown which occurred in the late spring or early summer of 1857. Sudden and terribly severe, it was described as "brain fever," accompanied by inflammatory rheumatism.‡ Taken sick as a "chubby lad," he emerged from his convalescence in Newport as a tall and *slender* youth who, though robust in bearing, was subject afterward to recurring attacks of nervous exhaustion. All former paternal plans for his entering the army were now put aside. But at this he rejoiced as he gazed seaward on the chromatic glories of the

* NOVEMBER—CASH RECEIVED. Nov. 22nd—\$3.00; Nov. 29th—\$3.00.

SPENT

For casts	\$2.50
To Brooklyn .....	.14
To church .....	.25
For looking glass .....	.75
" wash bowl and pitch.....	.75
" brush .....	.22
" gum Arabic .....	.25
" paper .....	.30
" cars .....	.15
" ferry .....	.04
" cars .....	.10
" <i>John Brown</i> .....	.25
" poor German .....	.25

\$5.95

JANUARY

Jan. 2	To Tuckahoe	\$.50
" 3	" " .....	.50
" "	pd Em .....	.50
" 4	poor man starving....	.40
" 5	" " " .....	.30
" 10	pr. stockings .....	.25
" 11	shirt .....	.50
" 12	undershirt .....	.30
" 15	poor man 12c a day for ten days	1.20
" 16	Circus .....	.50
" 21	omnibus .....	.12

† "When my father brought me home at that time," Steele MacKaye remarked laughingly, years later, "he probably cut short the promising career of a future railroad president."

‡ When I was in my teens, my father wrote to me: "I know now the vast importance of health—especially at your age. My progress—at that same period of growth—would have been very different and better, if I had not been overworked by hard study at your age." Cf. page ii, 324.

Newport shore, and inland over the glowing contours of late summer landscape. Greatly he rejoiced and took up his painter's kit, and wrote in his sketch-book:

"We are never tired so long as we can see far enough. From earth as a shore I look into that silent sea. I seem to partake its rapid transformations. The active enchantment reaches my dust. I dilate and conspire with the morning wind. I live the repose of the valley, its pomp of purple and gold."

NEWPORT: "WHITE TURBANS AND SCARLET BANDANAS"

"One summer in the early 'Fifties," my mother has written in a reminiscence, "when I was about six years old, I went from my home in Portsmouth on a visit to Newport, R. I.—my grandmother, Phoebe Rhodes (Medbery) being an old Rhode Islander. In those days Newport was a famous resort for rich Southerners. There, I remember, I was taking a walk with my mother, when we came upon a little group of darky women, the first I had ever seen; though in Portsmouth I had had glimpses of mysterious negro men, who came to our house at dawn, slept all day, and departed at sundown. These Newport negro women wore great white turbans and scarlet bandanas, and flashed very brilliant against the blue sea. They were carrying and tending white babies, and were laughing and chatting gaily.

"*'Mary,'* said my mother in a strange voice, *'I want you to look carefully at these women. We will go by them very slowly.'*

"*'What are they?'* I asked.

"*'Slaves!'* she answered. *'They are slave women, bought and sold in the market.'*

"I was awestruck. I had heard always of slaves, but never expected to see one in the flesh. And so these were slaves—laughing and looking so happy!

"*'But why do they look so happy?'*

"*'They don't realise what may befall them. They have kind masters now; but if they should lose them, they would be sold at the public slave block.'*

"I was overwhelmed. Slaves!—and looking so happy!"

ART AND ABOLITION; STUDIES WITH WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

Many such brilliant glimpses of a dark race and darker problem our young Abolitionist landscape-painter also encountered in Newport, on his seashore sketching rambles in '57. Sharp contrasts of racial types and ideals environed him there—contrasts which led to personal conflicts between himself and certain "young Southern gentlemen," his schoolmates in the William Leverett school at Newport, where he was entered that fall, with the sons of Henry James, Senior, and their boy neighbor, "Tom" Perry.* For Colo-

* Cf., on page i, 75, the account of my father's schoolmate, Thomas Sergeant Perry, concerning his memories of "Jim" McKaye in the Leverett School and

nel McKaye was now urging Jim toward a college career at Yale, in the old home of his Steele kindred, New Haven.

"It was lucky I was trained very early to box well," said Steele MacKaye, in 1877. He was speaking to some of his sons, on the lawn of his home in Stamford, Conn., handing them their boxing gloves for instruction in a bout with himself.

"Why so, father?"

Then he told them of his schoolboy days in Newport and of his fistic duels with the aforesaid "young Southern gentleman" in fierce bouts of *Abolition* versus *Slavery*, and how—thanks to his own early technique—*Abolition* was usually (though not always) the victor.

In Newport, Jim McKaye was the disciple of two Williams, masters in idealism. The same boyish fist which struck deft blows for William Lloyd Garrison was making as deft and ardent strokes (of the brush) for William Morris Hunt. For at Newport the famous American landscape and figure painter, who had studied at Paris with Couture and Millet, was teaching private classes in painting. With Hunt's quickening art and personality young Jim, as his pupil, had the privilege of coming in frequent contact, and the instigating effect was probably a contributing cause in his decision (during the fall of '58) to sail for Paris, to study there with his master's master, Couture—suggested perhaps by such whiffs as these from recorded conversations of Hunt with his pupils:

"I've seen boys come out of Couture's *atelier*, and go farther in three months than others would in three years. *They took the method at which he had arrived!* And mind that *abroad they don't tell you!* They neither show you nor tell you. Couture would say, 'That's horrid! If you can't do better than that, you'd better stop!' . . . A few years ago nobody would buy a Corot. He was so 'peculiar'! So was Christopher Columbus! *The pioneer is always peculiar!* . . .

"Read Taine! Read Blake! Read William Hazlitt! Read Brown-ing!* . . . Why didn't I like Cambridge and Harvard? *Because I love art!!* At Cambridge there was nothing to stimulate or develop the perceptions, and everything to suppress instinct and enthusiasm. One learned neither to see nor to feel. Everything was a *task*, a parrot's training. . . . Nothing takes the taste of grammar out of a boy's mouth like a green apple. Every school should have its *orchard*,

Hunt's studio, amid associations of ardent boyhood friendship with Henry and William James and young John La Farge. Cf. Hunt's photo in Chapter III.

* These were all "favourite authors" of Steele MacKaye, in after years.

as every army its schooner-load of onions and lemons to stave off the scurvy! . . . Blake says:

*'We are led to believe a lie
When we see with, not through the eye.'*

"Will I please to correct some of your mistakes? Mistakes! *We go on by mistakes!* Go ahead by making them. What if you do use bad grammar! I don't care—if *you have something to say!* . . . *Painting is the hardest thing in the world! Paint for fun!* I don't care whether it succeeds or not. Let success come long afterwards! . . . *Draw firm!—and be jolly!* Don't hurry—or you'll never get through!"

We may imagine how instinctively Jim McKaye concurred with his master's maxims—on academic studies and orchard apples! By his own urge he had already decided, and before long he was to inform his father, that he would never go to Yale, Harvard, or any college.

MUSIC AND THEODORE THOMAS

To this period belongs a glimpse of him (during the last part of his father's residence in Brooklyn Heights), caught from his sister Saidie's Journal, here quoted for its bearing on his own later relationships with musical composers and directors such as Edgar Stillman Kelley, Dvorák, Victor Herbert, Emile Mollenhauer, Anton Seidl, etc.

At this time, Theodore Thomas had very recently established in Brooklyn his first symphony-orchestra season, of which Col. McKaye was a financial patron. For this movement of musical art, young "Jamie" McKaye shared the deep sympathies here expressed by his sister, Saidie, in this excerpt from her Journal:

"Brooklyn, December 2d, 1857: This afternoon Emmie, Jamie and I went to the rehearsal. . . . Mendelssohn's fourth symphony in A, his impressions of Italy. To me, the first movement realises the influence upon an ardent nature of the clear, deep blue above, the rich endless green below, the golden exhilarant spontaneity of life around, the restlessness of emotion within, which characterise that land formed to be the garden of poetry. . . . The earnest and original *Andante* portrays feelings awakened by the mighty relics of Roman splendour—the perennial flowers and verdure ever young, mocking, while they decorate, the falling ruins of centuries. . . . The ceaselessly flowing and exquisitely melodious *Scherzo* suggests the luxurious light of the still moon, hung like a garment of glory on the boundless bosom of the deep, whose gentle heaving is so constant and uniform that, in

watching its unbroken rhythm, one might cease to know it moves. In the *Trio* one thinks of the sweetest light of the eye one loves, when it looks the look that surpasses speech. The *Saltarello* tells its own tale: the Carnival, with its wild life, its perpetual motion, its intoxicating ecstatic gaiety—the romp, the revelry, the rattling riot, the rustling, ridiculous, ranting roar of the rollicking holiday!

“The next piece was the ‘Naiads’ overture, by William Sterndale Bennet, Mendelssohn’s dearest friend. . . . The last was ‘Der Freischütz’ overture, by Weber. . . . And we are to have these musical treats once a week. Brooklyn seems brilliant!”

“THE HANDSOME BOY OF NEWPORT”

During a considerable part of this period (’57-’58), Jim McKaye was studying in the William Leverett boarding-school at Newport, with his head, however, so filled with dreams of art that one of his instructors, Prof. David I. S. Hart, was engaged to give him intensive tutoring, especially in French.

This tutor was a brilliant young Jew, a graduate of Groningen University, Holland, where he had been a professor. Though but twenty-five years old he was proficient in fourteen languages. Part of his time he spent in Portsmouth, N. H., tutoring there another lad named Jim, son of the Baptist minister, Rev. Nicholas Medbery. This Portsmouth Jim (James Knowles Medbery) had a young sister, Mary Medbery, then about twelve, concerning whose golden hair, blithe spirit and vivacious charms Hart used often to descant to his Newport pupil, bantering him with the prophecy that Jim would some day pay his heart’s homage to the little belle of Portsmouth. This prophecy Jim McKaye smiled at and forgot, until years later it was brought vividly home to him by an incident which is here recounted in the words of that “blithe spirit” herself. In 1923, nearly thirty years after my father’s death, in her own seventy-eighth year (next to her last), Mary Medbery MacKaye, my mother, wrote down for her children this personal memory of her girlhood (one of several “Tales of Arcady”), which she entitled *The Handsome Boy of Newport*:

“I must have been about eleven years old when Hart first came to live with us at Portsmouth—at a fortunate time. For my brother James was preparing to enter Brown University, and my dear mother had undertaken to tutor him—in addition to all her other endless activities as a writer, minister’s wife and mother, though occasionally her old friend, Rev. Dr. Peabody of Harvard, would aid in the tutoring. So young Hart was a God-send, for he was a fine scholar in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, a great delight to my mother, to whom these languages were familiar as a teacher. I well remember her rapt

expression as he chanted to her the Psalms in the original. (Only the other day, through the radio, I heard Rabbi Wise chant these same Psalms, and it brought back to me, with thrilling vividness, the experience of the long, long ago years!)

"Hart, homeless, had fled from Holland in disgrace, mixed up there in some students' riots which had brought upon him his father's anger, and he was driven forth penniless. So, in a strange land, my father had offered him refuge, and he stayed with us for several months, giving his daily lessons to Brother James, till a position was found for him, as teacher of modern languages, at the William Leverett private school in Newport, R. I.

"The following summer, when Hart returned from Newport to make us a visit, I was twelve years old and had just entered High School. Opposite us lived my dear friend, Mary Leighton—a cousin of Celia Leighton, who afterwards became the well-known poet, Celia Thaxter. . . . Mary had another cousin—George Leighton, a fine-looking boy of sixteen—a great beau, who had always devoted himself to girls older than himself. But when I entered the High School, where George also was a pupil, to everybody's surprise, he transferred his allegiance to me. Almost every morning he would be waiting at the corner, to carry my bag of books, and at close of school he would be at the gate, to render me the same attentions—which would encounter the incredulous stare of the older girls!

"Much amused at all this, Hart soon began to poke fun at me, and to expatiate on the far greater attractions of the boy he had been coaching in French at Newport. 'You wouldn't think much of your George Leighton,' he would say, 'if you could see my Newport boy!' Whereupon he would launch forth in praise of his handsome pupil—his elegances and accomplishments—his cleverness and his riches, for his father was one of the wealthy cottagers of Newport—and of his coming trip to Europe, a very great thing in those days. I heard all this with a toss of my head, to indicate that my loyalty to George was untouched by all these storied splendours. . . .

"One still, hot Sunday, while Father and Mother had gone to afternoon service, I sat reading in the parlour. Suddenly Hart appeared, to say he was going down to the river with a friend and should very likely go out for a sail. 'A sail,' I said, 'on Sunday!' 'Oh, that's all right,' he replied. 'Your father is very liberal, and he knows that Saturday is the Jew's Sabbath.' So, laughing, he went to the street door. I followed and locked the door behind him; but I had hardly taken a step to return to my book, when I heard a knock on the little side windows of the front door and Hart's voice calling: 'I've got something for you!'

"I opened the door at once, all curiosity. With a low bow, the young man presented me with a small glass stone, such as used to be put in penny rings, which he had just picked up on the steps, saying with mock solemnity: 'This is for your engagement ring with my handsome boy in Newport!'

"Then, with a gay laugh, he bounded down the steps and was off. I

went back again to my reading; but I had been there only a short time when I heard people running past the house on the way to the river, which was just at the foot of our street. Then came shouts and excited exclamations. I ran to the door. 'What is it? What is it?' I exclaimed. But nobody paid any heed. All I could do was to stand and wait, in apprehension of some tragedy, until I could attract the attention of people who now began slowly to return from the wharves.

"'What is it? What is the matter?' I exclaimed again.

"'A sail-boat has just capsized.'

"'Where?' I asked.

"'In the middle of the river, trying to get under the bridge. The mast struck the bridge and the boat overturned.'

"'Who was in the boat?' I asked, breathless.

"'Two young men. No one seems to know. Strangers, probably.'

"'My heart stood still. Could it have been? I could hardly speak. 'Were they *drowned*?' I managed to ask.

"'Must have been. They'll try to find them, but very little chance of that, as the tide is going out strong.'

"'And there was no chance. The gay, laughing breathing being, who had scarcely left my side, was gone from us forever.

"Your father and I had been married several years when, one day, in looking through a closet, I came across an old tin box tucked away on the top shelf. It had not been opened for ages, so I carried it into the sitting-room, where James (your father) was reading. In the room beyond I could hear the children, Hal and Will, playing with their blocks.

"'I wonder what's in this old box!' I said.

"'Suppose we find out,' James answered.

"Whereupon we put the box on the table between us and took off the strap. The box was filled with a mass of photographs, old letters, souvenirs, etc. We were taking out one thing after another, explaining the souvenirs and laughing at the old-fashioned photographs, when suddenly James gave an amazed exclamation: 'Good heavens, Mollie! Where in the world did you ever get this?' And he handed me a small photograph-case which he had just opened. (I have it yet.)

"'That? Why, that is a picture of Hart. He lived with us once in Portsmouth, and prepared Brother James for Brown.'

"'He lived in your home?'

"'Yes. He was drowned, poor fellow. But what is it?' I asked, noting his growing emotion. 'Why are you so excited?'

"'Great heavens, Mollie! Hart was my tutor in Newport. He taught me French, just before that first time I went to Europe. He lived in *your* family? He taught Jim! Then your father was the minister who was so kind to him!—Jim is the boy he taught Greek to, and you—you are the little sister!'

"'And you,' I exclaimed, '*you*—are "the handsome boy of Newport."'

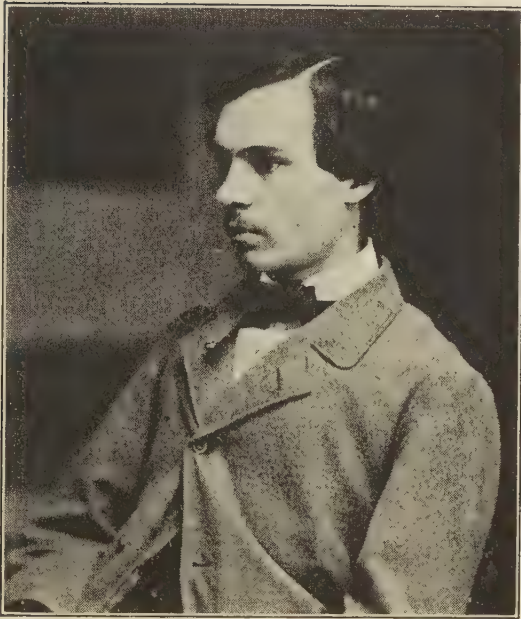
"Then followed hurried questions full of amazed excitement, through which it transpired that your father had gone to Europe by the time the news of Hart's death had reached Newport, so that he had never dreamed that the kind New England minister was my own dear father. . . . As we gazed at each other with solemn wonder, we heard the joyous shouts of our little boys as their tall block-tower came down with a crash, and our hearts were filled with awe at this strange world of mystery, where through the maze of circumstance we had found each other, led by the divinely guiding hand."

"WILLIE" JAMES ON THE OCEAN WALL

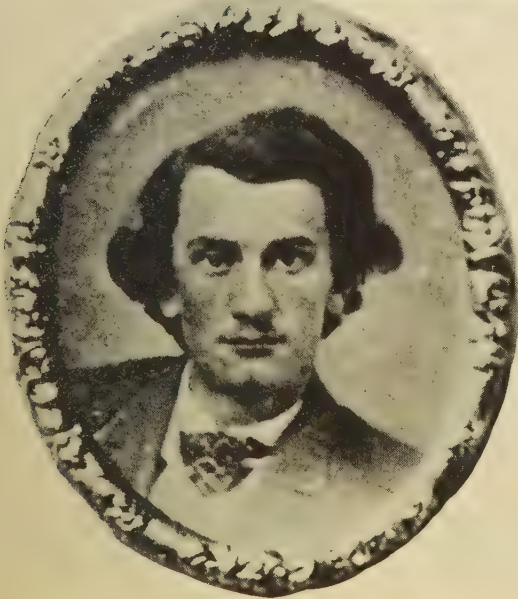
A cherished tradition in the household of Steele MacKaye was always conjured by the words "Willie James." It dated from this time of early association with his boyhood's dearest friend, who afterwards at Harvard became eminent in philosophy and psychology. In Newport, their fathers were neighbours, and intimates in conversation upon moral philosophy, etc., Henry James Senior having brought out in 1857 his *Christianity, the Logic of Creation*. On at least two occasions Col. McKaye rented his own villa for the winter to Mr. James and his children, Henry, Wilkie and "Willie," who were schoolmates of Jim at the William Leverett School. The last was instinctively an artist and studied painting with Hunt. So Willie James and Jim McKaye, not only as neighbours and playmates, but from a common love of art and an effervescence of ideas, struck up a fond mutual attachment which, though the paths of their later lives seldom met, was lastingly affectionate.

More than once, in weariness at the feverish fret of theatrical life, MacKaye would exclaim: "How good it would be to settle down in quiet Cambridge and swap philosophy with Willie James!" And years later, in that quiet of his Cambridge home, Prof. William James said to this biographer: "Why don't you come to see me more often? When your father and I were boys together in Newport, your grandfather's house was like a second home to me."

Again, seated with me in a corner of the Players Club, New York, his brother, Henry James, the novelist, recalled with deft strokes of reminiscence old pleasant associations of the two families at Newport and the fervent boyhood fellowship subsisting between "Willie" and "Jimmy," albeit he did not refer to (though doubtless he would have smiled at) the long-forgotten by-name of "Sissy" which those incorrigible younger boys had then used as epithet for the

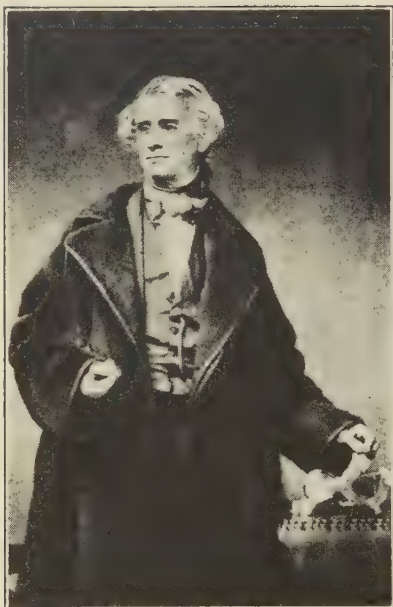


WILLIAM JAMES
(Aged about 17)
From a daguerreotype,
about 1859.
(Courtesy of his son,
Henry James, 1926.)

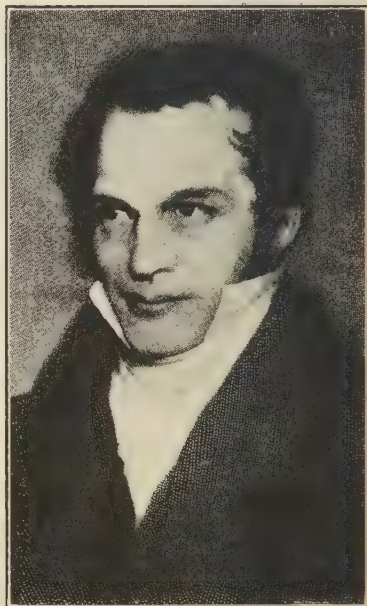


JAMES STEELE MCKAYE
(Aged about 18)
From a daguerreotype,
about 1860.

At Newport, about 1858, these lads, "Willie" and "Jimmy," became warm friends and schoolmates: comrades there also of "Harry" James, John La Farge and "Tom" Sergeant Perry (pages 70, 75-77).



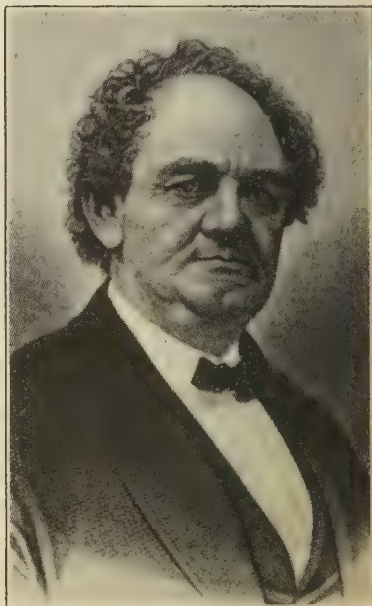
SAMUEL F. B. MORSE
Artist-Inventor of the Telegraph.



WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT
(From a painting by S. F. B. Morse.)



JOHN BROUGHAM
*Irish Actor-Dramatist, Manager of
Brougham's Lyceum and Theatre.*



PHINEAS T. BARNUM
*Manager of Barnum's Museum and
Barnum's Circus.*

Among these elders of young MacKaye, Morse and Bryant were associates of his father (pages i, 100, 101; ii, 254); later Brougham was a fellow-dramatist. From his friend, Barnum, MacKaye once bought an eleven-foot anaconda (pages i, 236, and index).

sensitively artistic, just-emerging author of fugitive short stories, "Harry" James himself.

By the fall of '58, the plans of Jim McKaye as an artist had reached their crisis in his own and his father's definite decision for him to study painting abroad.

Here, then, at Newport, by the seaweed strewn rocks which countless times he had roamed and sketched,* on an afternoon in October, Jim McKaye and Willie James sat together on a grey stone wall, overlooking the ocean-voyaging ships, in one of which Jimmy was to leave on the morrow, via New York, for strange adventures overseas. Here he had reached his first "great divide"—between boyhood and young manhood, between home ties and foreign conquests.

Side by side, the two boys sat talking, talking—occasionally pacing up and down. Affectionately, effervescingly, furiously, they talked on and on till, all too swiftly, the blue day sank in twilight. At last, on the grey rocks, came the final handclasp. Then, on one side of the wall, Willie turned slowly toward the home lights of the villa, while on the other side Jim turned darkling toward the sea, his young heart burning with high quests of the unknown and a great homelessness.

From New York, on the *S. S. Arago*,† October 9, 1858, he sailed alone for Paris.

* One of his Newport sketches—a view of "Bishop Berkeley's Rock"—still survives.

† His passport (dated Sept. 6, 1858) gives the following identification: "J. S. McKaye: Age, 16 years; forehead high; eyes, dark hazel; nose, slightly Roman; mouth, medium; chin, round; hair, dark brown; complexion, dark; face, oval; stature, 5 feet 10 inches." In later life his stature was 5 feet 10½ inches, though his superb bearing gave the impression of his being considerably taller, and his dark curling hair appeared almost black.

This same steamship, *Arago*, seven years later, made an historic trip, from New York to Charleston, S. C., bearing a distinguished party, including William Lloyd Garrison and Henry Ward Beecher, as guests of the Secretary of War, to attend the ceremonies of raising the Stars and Stripes on Fort Sumter, April 14, 1865,—an occasion of festivities interrupted, the next day, by news of the death of Abraham Lincoln.

CHAPTER III

ART AND WAR

Young Manhood

1858-1863 *

IN PARIS HE JOINED HIS FATHER AND SISTERS, WHO HAD PRECEDED him abroad in July. Here, however, he was soon left alone in bachelor apartments in the Boulevard Montmartre, his sisters going to Italy while Col. McKaye returned to New York. Before leaving Paris, the Colonel took young J. S. M. to his banker and said: "This is my son. Give him whatever money he asks for. Honour his drafts and charge to me."

So at sixteen, as his own master, he entered upon his art studies at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, with unlimited funds at his disposal. Long afterwards he said: "My father was rashly indulgent to me then. I believe it was not so much good morals as good taste which kept me from going to the devil." It was also good mentality, combined with a tremendous capacity for hard work, which characterised him throughout life. His father's wealth and generosity, however, established in him very early an oblivious disregard for money, together with habits of largess and princely hospitality, which he found bewilderingly difficult to modify in later periods of struggling poverty.

THE SMOKING POODLE; STUDIOS: COUTURE, MEISSONIER,
BOUGUEREAU, TROYON

Just before sailing, the Colonel had taken him to a circus, where he became wildly delighted with the tricks of a performing poodle dog. Nothing would content him but to own the dog, so his father bought it for him at a great price.

In his bachelor quarters the poodle was his constant comrade. "In the mornings," he himself related, "I would wake up and call 'Café!' Then away the poodle would rush, to the garçon at a neighbouring restaurant, scratch and pull his trousers, and soon garçon, tray and coffee would be coming up the stairs amid jubilant barkings." Everywhere he went he took the dog with him. A figure brilliantly picturesque in his artist garb of velvet jacket and cap, he would pass along the boulevards followed by the poodle walking

* These years were spent by J. S. M. in Paris, New York, Newport, Rochester, (trips in Maryland), Eagleswood, N. J., Baltimore, Washington (Pennsylvania, Virginia), Mt. Desert, Great Barrington, Mass.

on his hind legs and smoking a pipe—trailed after by crowds of Paris gamins, for whom the young art student would show off the dog's wonderful tricks on the sidewalk. In a note-book of this time, he wrote:

"When a man can trust himself, rules are superfluous; do as you please—so long as you please to do right."

In his work he always trusted himself, and his self-confidence was creative. As a student at the Beaux Arts, his art work continued without interruption for about a year, during which he used his own resources to seek out the foremost masters of painting then in Paris and worked in the private studios of Couture, Meissonier, Bouguereau and Troyon, under the inspiration of their personal direction. In this way he developed a wide scope of knowledge in painting. The sweeping concepts and classic figure work of Couture's "*L'Enfant Prodigue*" and "*Les Romains de la Decadence*" contrasted with the historical paintings of Meissonier in his Napoleon Cycle and his genre pictures with their microscopic treatment of detail. In Bouguereau's paintings—such as the "*Apollo and the Muses*" in the Theatre de Bordeaux—McKaye studied the large decorative qualities conformable to noble architecture in the theatre. But most congenial to his own love of nature in landscape and animals was his work with Troyon,* the creator of "*Valley of La Touque*," "*Oxen going to work*," etc., who was then in his prime.

In his own painting work during the next decade, McKaye devoted himself almost exclusively to landscape and animals, especially cattle in settings of nature. The best of these paintings were ranked highly by his fellow artists; but all except a few sketches were later destroyed in his Paris studio during the Commune. The accompanying study of cattle, drawn in pencil, and the landscape painting in oil (reproduced in this chapter), are among his sketches which have survived. The picture of cattle represents a relique of his "*Troyon period*," the landscape—his work resulting from his later studies with George Inness.

PARISIAN ANECDOTES

During these early Paris days he was also an enthusiastic student of the theatre, especially of the Theatre Français, and the forma-

* Prof. S. S. Curry, of Boston, wrote (1916): "I have deeply considered the influence of Troyon upon Steele MacKaye, who must have been among the greatest of his pupils, I never saw a sign of imitation in MacKaye's work or drawing; he was original; and I have often pondered the result upon human art had he concentrated upon painting." Cf. portrait of Troyon, in this chapter.

tive influence of French life and history is evident in one of his most successful plays, *Paul Kaurar*, produced about thirty years later. At the time of its New York production (1888), General Victor Vifquain, American consul to Panama, a native of Brussels—who in his teens had been a fellow art student—wrote to the *New York Sun*:

"My old friend of the Boulevard Montmartre may remember how he scared me, one night, by dreaming he saw his sweetheart executed in the Place de la Guillotine. MacKaye and I were chums in those days. He was greatly interested in studies of the French Revolution. Our apartments adjoined, and one night, after coming home from a tour of the Quartier Latin, we bade each other good night in high spirits. Two hours afterwards, I was roused by the most frightful groaning from his apartment. I rushed in. He was sitting up in bed, tearing his hair—his eyes rolling in the most desperate manner.

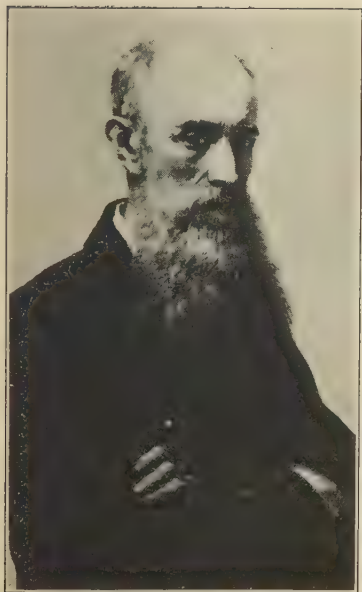
"‘In heaven’s name,’ I said, ‘what is the matter?’ ‘*O mon Dieu!*’ he cried out, ‘how horrible! I have just seen Diane guillotined before my eyes, and the blood from her beautiful throat almost trickled on my upturned face.’ It was an hour before I could pacify him. He was interested then in a beautiful young lady named Diane. In the dream scene of *Paul Kaurar*, he must have utilised his own experience in a highly effective scene of his play."

Another friend of his in Paris was an old artist named Adolph Laguerre, who in youth had married a young princess of Saxony. She had eloped with Laguerre, and been discarded by her family. After her death he lived with his daughter in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine.

"His wife’s death," said MacKaye, in an interview, years later, "was a sad blow to the old artist. He had but one motive now in life—to give his daughter a dowry at which her mother’s noble family would not sneer. For this he hinted to me mysteriously, he had secured a work of art valued at 300,000 francs. At about this time, there came to me sudden news of the probability of civil war in America and an imperative summons from my father to return home.

"The night before I sailed, M. Laguerre feelingly informed me he wished to reveal to me the most wonderful gem in the field of art—his daughter’s dowry. He had kept it in hiding for years, lest it be stolen. Taking a candle, he preceded me upstairs to a room under the eaves. There to my astonishment he fell on his knees, making the sign of the cross.

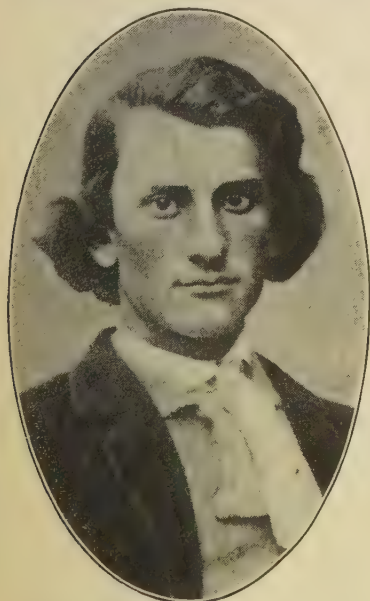
"In one corner of the dingy attic stood a rough-looking box, which he unlocked and took out another of ebony, carved most wonderfully. Commanding me to kneel and muttering a prayer, he lifted the lid. My amazed eyes fell upon one of the noblest works ever executed by



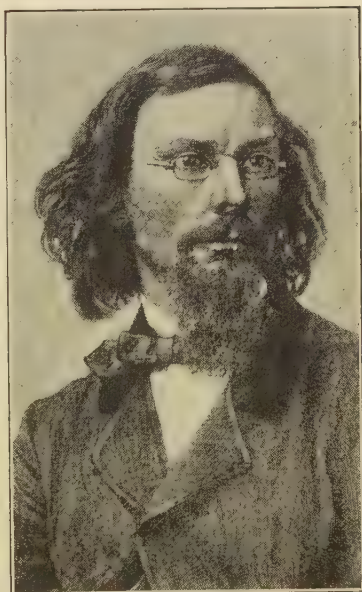
WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT (*Page 65.*)



CONSTANT TROYON (*Page 73.*)

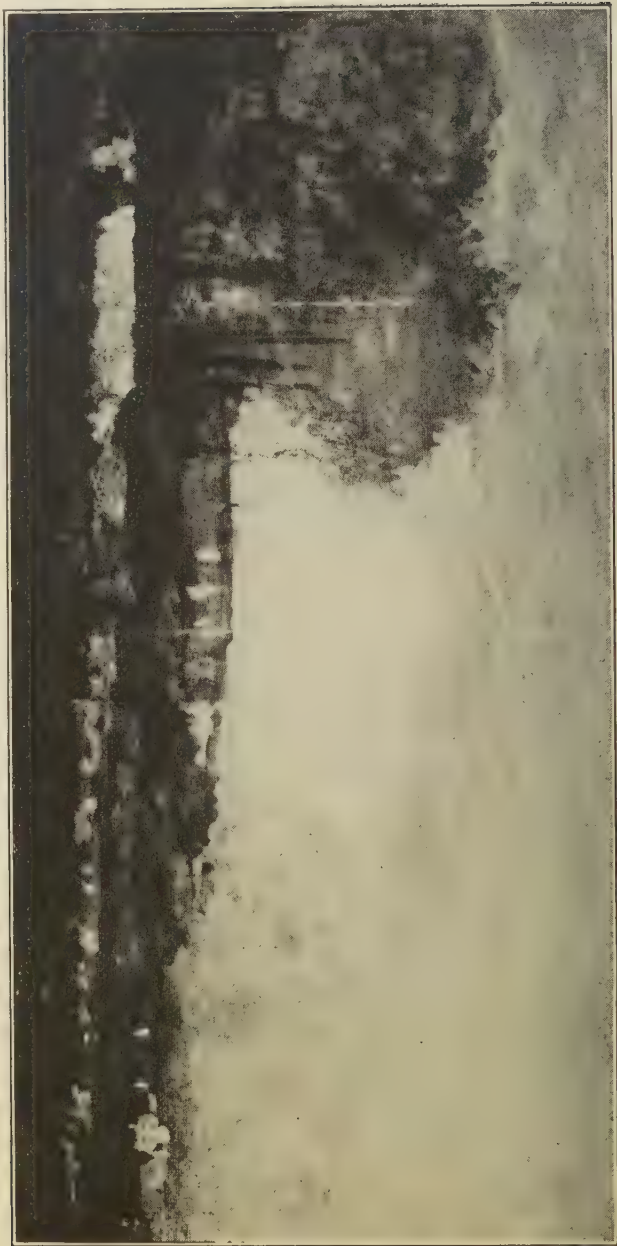


"JIM" STEELE MCKAYE—aged 22
From a daguerreotype, 1864.



GEORGE INNESS
(*Pages 98-99.*)

THE YOUNG ARTIST AND HIS MASTERS
America and France; 1858—1864.



LANDSCAPE IN WATERCOLOUR, BY GEORGE INNESS.
Painted, and signed, by Inness for his pupil, "Jim" Steele McKaye. 1864 (footnote on page 89).

the hand of Michelangelo, a crucifix, carved in ivory, representing the passion of the Christ. One side of the figure expressed the agony of the man, the other—the ecstasy of the Redeeming God. As the old man pointed out its sublime treatment, I could not determine whether his tears were a reverent tribute to the Redeemer, or to the artist. . . . I never saw him again. The next morning I sailed for America."

NEWPORT: FRIENDSHIPS: "HARRY" AND "WILLIE" JAMES; "TOM" PERRY

The "summons" to return to America sent by his father brought Jim McKaye back to Newport in the autumn of 1859 in time to rejoin his friend "Willie" James, before the latter's own departure for Europe with his brother "Harry" James and their parents, Henry James, Senior, and his wife. Nearly seventy years later this biographer has been privileged to hear a first-hand account of that departure, related to him by the only survivor of those Newport times of boyhood friendship—Mr. Thomas Sergeant Perry, of Boston, whom Henry James, the novelist, has described * as "superexcellent and all-reading, all-engulfing friend of those days."

In the late Eighteen-Fifties, "Tom" Perry was a boon companion of the James brothers and Jim McKaye, at Newport. In February, 1927, at his Boston home, Mr. Perry has related to me further details of my father's life amid those youthful associations, concerning which the following are notes set down by me (in part verbatim) from Mr. Perry's own words of recollection:

"October third, 1859, is a date that revives for me the early memory of a poignant sorrow, for on that night Harry and Willie James were going away to Europe, and I was in depths of a boyish despair. So also was Jim McKaye, your father, who went down with me to the boat to bid our comrades goodbye. All of us were intimate friends, school-mates and neighbours. We didn't differentiate our ages: we were all too interested in ideas. Our companionship was a keen mutual delight, and our parting (for such a long, overseas separation †) was a rather solemn occasion. When Jim and I walked back together through the night, up Bull Street to Kay—where Colonel McKaye's house, ‡ with the Gothic roofs and little tower, stood near a rustic lane with

* In *Notes of a Son and Father*, by Henry James, Scribners', 1914, page 81. In that book (page 108) Henry James describes the "curate," Rev. William C. Leverett, whose school he attended with "Jim" McKaye and "Tom" Perry.—Thomas Sergeant Perry, Harvard, '66, is the author of *The Life and Letters of Francis Lieber, John Fiske*, etc. Cf. his record in "Who's Who in America."

† The James family returned from Europe, on the *S. S. Adriatic*, September 23, 1860.

‡ Colonel McKaye's house was No. 13 Kay Street. In *The Letters of William James* (edited by his son Henry James), William James recalls in a letter (page 34) a "well-stored pantry like that of good old 13 Kay Street."

stables—I remember tarrying outside with Jim, talking affectionately of our friends, the James, who were to sail from New York for Havre, in the *S. S. Vanderbilt*, on October eighth. There we talked on a good while, out of our hearts, till at last Jim turned in the path to his home and I went away through the lane.

"SANDWICH ISLANDERS AND BROWNINGITES"; JOHN LA FARGE—"A YOUTH OF 70"; ARCHY PELL

"What was he like then—Jim? Well, he was big and strong, sturdy, broader-shouldered than most youths, not burly exactly, but in that direction, with the muscular back of a strong swimmer. Not a dandy, but handsome, quite the ardent youth, very honest and enthusiastic, full of ambitious hopes and determinations. He was bent on the drama. He painted and drew.* I recall him in William Morris Hunt's studio. He and I took many walks with Harry and Willie James—often along the shore, and behind 'Second Beach' (as we called Sachuest Beach) to a picturesque place, called 'Paradise.' We all went sailing, rowing and fishing together. We swam in the surf and in Easton's Pond. At swimming we were veritable Sandwich Islanders. All the while we talked on serious things—beauty and nature—poetry—the quiet-coloured end of evening.' We were all Browningites. Browning was our god. Your father, in his teens, was a very ardent raver, with a certain dramatic warmth.—Young John La Farge, also one of our small group, was doing his Browning drawings about that time. He afterwards married my sister.—In 1857, William Morris Hunt had come back from Paris, to teach painting at Newport. I remember when La Farge first came there, in the summer of '59, Willie James exclaimed to us one day:

"There's a new fellow come to Hunt's class. He knows everything. He has read everything. He has seen everything—paints everything. He's a marvel!"

"How old is he?" I asked.

"Well," said Willie, 'he may be seventeen, and he may be seventy.'

"Another boy comrade was Archy Pell (Duncan Archibald Pell, son of Duncan Campbell Pell, of New York). He went to the war in the First Rhode Island Regiment and fought under Burnside. He died young, about 1870.

WM. LEVERETT; SCHOOLMATES; COL. MCKAYE EDITS *ROUND TABLE*;
CHARLES MACKAY, SCOTCH POET

"Jim McKaye, the James boys—from Harry, the oldest, to 'the infant' Bob (Robertson James), and I attended at Newport the William Leverett School, of which the headmaster was Rev. William C. Leverett, of the Harvard class of '52. Leverett was amiable to the last degree, but insignificant—a little suit of clothes, stuffed out: a small Napoleon, in miniature. He would say to us boys, at our desks: 'The class may lay aside their books,' and then he'd proceed to 'show off' his own ora-

* "Your father's pictures," Mr. Perry has written me (Feb. 4, 1927), "he painted in a sort of studio rigged in a barn—this barn close to the house, at the head of Bull Street, now moved away. His work, as I recall it, was very dark, after the fashion of the time."

tory. We boys had to speak pieces. One of our teachers was named Gimerez. The school was held in an old stuffy house—why we weren't asphixiated I don't know.

"Among our schoolmates there were Ned Deacon (Edward Parker Deacon, of Boston), whose daughter later became a Duchess of Marlborough; James K. Lawrence, son of the Governor of Rhode Island; George Wetmore (later, Senator from Rhode Island); Wheaton King; and Louis and Henry Tiffany, of Baltimore (of no kin relation to the Tiffanys of New York). . . .

"Yes, I remember well your grandfather, Colonel McKaye,—tall, light-haired, handsomely impressive. We boys used often to run in and out of his house, which later the James family occupied for two years, 1860-'61.* (It was afterwards moved away.†) About that time, Colonel McKaye edited *The Round Table*, ‡ published in New York—a literary journal of distinction and influence at that time. In 1857, by the way, Charles MacKay, the famous Scotch poet, visited Newport (very likely at your grandfather's), and I recall well the literary excitement occasioned by his sojourn there."

NEW YORK; WRITERS AND ARTISTS; POSING FOR SHAKESPEARE STATUE

During young McKaye's absence abroad, his father had removed, in 1859, with his wife and daughters, from Brooklyn Heights to a residence he had bought in New York: a stately brownstone house, at 72 East 19th Street, still standing (renumbered 118) three doors east of Irving Place, diagonally opposite the garden of the Players Club. Here Col. McKaye's home was a hospitable focus of literary and artistic life, especially in Abolitionist circles. At the back of his residence the houses of his friends, Judge Edmunds and Robert Dale Owen ‡ (on Irving Place), and the noted surgeon, Dr. Austin Flint ‡ (next the corner of 19th and Irving Place) had attractive yards inter-connecting with his own.

Here, in the fervid times preceding and during the Civil War, came frequently as guests and friends many leaders of national thought and action. Among these were William Cullen Bryant, Horace Greeley, Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Parke Godwin, Edward Everett Hale, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Ward Beecher, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, Julia Ward Howe, James T. Fields, Albert Brown, owner

* Rented, during those winters, to Henry James, Senior, by Colonel McKaye.

† Cf. page i, 230. ‡ Cf. Appendix.

‡ Dr. Austin Flint had also neighbored Col. McKay in Buffalo, where Flint had published a medical journal, in 1845.—In his New York house (still standing, 1927), Robert Dale Owen—who wrote many pamphlets and books on spiritualism—held his then famous séances with the medium, Mme. Disdebar. As a young man in Indiana, R. D. Owen was also the author of a very early American play:—"Pocahontas, a Historical Drama in Five Acts, by a Citizen of the West." Published by G. Dearborn, 1837.

of the Evening Post, and his wife, Mattie Griffith. Friends living close by were Alice and Phoebe Cary (at 53 East 20th St.), Anne Lynch Botta, the Oakleys, Ogdens, Roosevelts, Appletons, Putnams, Harpers, George Ward Nichols, art critic; the painters, George Inness, Edward Pope, Eastman Johnson, Colman, Whittridge, Rowse, Staigg; the sculptors, Henry Kirke Brown, John Rogers and J. Q. A. Ward. To several of these artists Col. McKaye gave commissions for paintings and busts.

Just around the corner, at 268 Fourth Avenue, in 1860, a twelve-year-old-sculptor-to-be, little "Gus" Saint-Gaudens, was then errand-boy after school for his father, Bernard Saint-Gaudens, at his shoe store, whence young Augustus carried back and forth the shoes of his father's special customers. Amongst these, Col. McKaye's close friend, Horace Greeley, was a steady purchaser at Bernard Saint-Gaudens' store, where (writes Homer Saint-Gaudens *) "Greeley must have delighted to wrangle with this argumentative shoemaker upon the philosophy of foot-gear, in which he had special lasts made for his daughters." Later in the 'Sixties, young Saint-Gaudens experienced in his own art development a "powerful influence" from a special exhibit made by Col. McKaye of Ward's Indian statue, in a neighbouring Broadway shop.

"When J. Q. A. Ward exhibited his 'Indian Hunter' in plaster in an art store on the east side of Broadway," wrote (years afterward *) Augustus Saint-Gaudens, "it was a revelation, and *I know of nothing that had so powerful an influence on me, in those early years.*"

That particular plaster cast of Ward's famous statue—so I learn from a letter of my grandfather—was Col. McKaye's personal copy (kept by him years after), which he had placed for exhibition in that Broadway art store, to serve a special purpose; for the Colonel was then organizing (in March, 1868) a committee of leading financiers and artists, to raise a fund for the purchase of the statue in bronze, to be presented to Central Park, where it still stands. On this committee, besides James McKaye, were J. Pierpont Morgan, Daniel Huntington, Samuel Robinson Gifford, Lucius Tuckerman, Richard Morris Hunt, Legrand Lockwood and Levi P. Morton. A bust by Ward of Col. McKaye himself,

* In the *Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens*, edited and amplified by Homer Saint-Gaudens, The Century Co., New York, 1913.

modelled at about that time, is reproduced in the accompanying photograph, included in this chapter.

For a more famous statue by Ward—the Shakespeare,* on Central Park Mall—young James Steele McKaye posed on several occasions, during an interval of his war campaigns, when he was recuperating from illness. The first occasion—as my mother has often recounted to me—occurred in this way. One day, when young McKaye dropped in to his studio, Ward said:

“Jim, I’ve been working like the devil on this pose but I can’t get what I want. I want the old bard to be thinking—but he *ain’t*! What ails him?”

“That’s simple, J. Q.” said Jim, “instead of making him pensive you’ve made him sleepy. The difference in pose is slight but radical. It affects the whole body—legs, torso as well as head. The posture of thought should be like *this*.” And Jim illustrated by assuming a posture of absorbed thinking.

“Hold it! Don’t move!” cried Ward, and began working furiously at his clay to catch the pose, which McKaye resumed again on further visits, from which he profited by making clay sketches himself under his friend Ward’s supervision.

In Ward’s old age, at a dinner of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the year before he died, wishing to verify the above incident, I said to the venerable sculptor, laughingly: “Mr. Ward, there’s a tradition in my family that the legs of your Shakespeare in Central Park are ‘substantially’ my father’s. Is that so?” “Yes,” he replied with a twinkle, “I guess those are Jim’s legs—‘substantially,’ and so is the pose, too!” In further chat, Ward reminisced of his early friendship with my father and confirmed the above anecdote of my mother. On my father’s death, Ward was one of his pallbearers.

APPRENTICE AT THE OLD BOWERY AND OLYMPIC THEATRES

On young McKaye’s return to America, early in 1860, though the tension between North and South was every day increasing, there was as yet no certainty of actual war. He was confronted, then, with choosing his life career. In his own nature, the choice of profession between painter and actor was a struggle made turbu-

* This statue was presented to Central Park and dedicated there on the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare’s birth, April 23, 1864. On that occasion James Steele McKaye was present with his friend, the sculptor. Fifty-two years later (April 23, 1916), at the ceremonies on the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, a poem—*The Player*—by McKaye’s son (this biographer) was read there by the well-known actor, Douglas Wood.

lent by his father's absolute opposition to the career of an actor. But for that, he might have entered upon his work in the theatre ten years earlier than he did. In October, 1884, addressing his Lyceum Theatre School of acting, at its opening, he said to his pupils:

"Twenty-five years ago, when I desired to go on the stage, there was no school where I could prepare, except the ballet. My father had a great contempt for the stage, and so I had clandestinely to go down to the Bowery Theatre *, and afterwards to the old Olympic—and associate with perhaps the most debased crowd in New York City.

"I had to dress and undress with that crowd in a low, dark, filthy room, filled with tobacco smoke. That was not very pleasant, but it was a very excellent test of my love for my art. It was also a splendid test for a whole school of actors; for out of the crowd only the best were permitted to have a part. The result was that, in those days, this country was filled with stock companies superior to any stock company in existence to-day."

(JAN.-MARCH, '60): WENDELL PHILLIPS, PATTI, ARTIST'S RECEPTIONS

During the winter of 1860, a diary of his sister Saidie †—then a brilliant and beautiful girl of nineteen, two years older than Jim—gives some vistas of my father's life. Brother and sister were devoted chums, so that these glimpses of her and her friends give intimations also of his own ardours for music, art, Abolition and the zest of life:

(Tues., Jan. 31, 1860): "This evening Father, Jim, Emmy and I went to the Cooper Institute to hear Wendell Phillips lecture on *Toussaint l'Ouverture*. It was glorious. He is ages beyond his time—a seer and prophet. What exquisite dignity, what refined and elegant oratory! . . . (Feb. 2): Mr. Appleton, Emmy, Mr. Whittridge, Mama, Jim and I went to Laura Keane's to see *The Heart of Midlothian*, admirably put on; every part well sustained. . . . (Feb. 3): This evening our soirée came off. There were quantities of gentlemen, the artists Colman, Brown, Staigg, Nichols and Whittridge. Every one seemed to enjoy it. I, for one, had great fun dancing. . . . (Feb. 8): This evening Mr. Crommellin, Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Spring and Wm. Goodwin were here. . . . (Feb. 9): To the Oakleys. Jim went to the Grand Sherwood ball. . . . (Feb. 10): This aft. to the Opera with Jim and Mr. Sam Colman: *Der Freischütz* with Stigelli, Colson, Patti, Strackosch. This eve. Mr. (James) May and Mr. La Farge were here. . . . (Feb. 14): Jim, Em. and I to hear them rehearse *Antigone*. Mr. and Mrs. Frothingham, Lizzie Alger, Dr. War-

* The present Thalia theatre.

† Cf. footnote on page i, 104.

ner* here. To Mr. Sherwood's reception. . . . (Feb. 18): To the Patti matinée: *Barber of Seville*. Patti, as *Rosina*, sang prettily, exquisitely, so to speak *birdishly*. . . . (Sun., Feb. 19): All the family to hear Mr. Samuel Longfellow preach. The place was freezing, but the sermon most beautiful. Father said, 'There is none of our ministers so spiritual and deep as Mr. Longfellow.' . . . (Feb. 22): Sleigh ride to Central Park, this morning: many people skating. This eve. we chartered an omnibus and a large party of us to the theatre. . . . (March 2): Jim and I had a long walk on the back piazza, talking of our crosses. Oh, young people have the trials and sorrows springing just from their very youth, that receive understanding sympathy from few other spirits. . . . (March 6): Jim and I to Wallack's, to see *The Romance of a Poor Young Man!*"

RECITING "MERCHANT OF VENICE"; SKETCHING,
ROCHESTER AND NEWPORT

This glimpse of him is given by his cousin, Millicent Alling, of Rochester, then a girl about fifteen:

"Acting was considered very dreadful by his Scotch Aunt Sarah, so Jim didn't talk about it in the family. But on a visit to Rochester (about '58 or '60), he took me up stairs to the sitting-room, locked the door and recited the whole play of *The Merchant of Venice*. I never saw anything so expressive! And when he acted *Shylock*, I was so frightened: I can just see how he came toward me—his eyes! Oh, it was tremendous! . . . On another visit—it was May Day, 1860—he took me sketching up the Genessee river. On the other side we saw an old deserted glue factory, tumbled down and picturesque. He was dressed very stylishly in a dark blue coat, straw hat, white duck trousers and patent leather shoes. But he was so taken with that old building to sketch, that he just plunged into the water and carried me across."

During the summer of 1860 he was again in Newport, sketching with fellow artists and sharing the social life of his father's villa, where Henry James, Sr., with his family, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson were neighbours and intimate friends.

GLIMPSES: OCT., '60-JUNE '61: PRINCE OF WALES, BEECHER,
CUSHMAN, LINCOLN ELECTED

In the autumn, his sister, Saidie McKaye, writes again in her diary, from which I shall here quote somewhat at length for the last glimpses it gives of a lost American epoch, in transition from the serenities of art and intellectual culture into the all-engulfing

* Dr. Lewis T. Warner, to whom, as a widower—nearly ten years later—Saidie McKaye was married. Her step-daughters, May and Lou, are now (1927) Mrs. John Sherwood (of Oakland, Cal.) and Mrs. Charles Loring Brace (of the Children's Aid Society, New York City).

emotions of war. Between the lines of her diary, written in swift delicate script, one may behold in imagination the genial landscape era of Inness, with its dreamy verdures, being swallowed up in awful aquamarines of reality by the tidal age of Lincoln.

(Oct. 10, 1860): "The summer has been passed at Newport, in our Kay St. cottage, and here we are back again in New York, now in our house, 72 East 19th St.* Jim and I came on together earlier than expected, as Father rented our house in Newport to the Jameses for the winter. . . . Yesterday, with Julia Oakley to Wallack's: Brougham's new play, *Playing with Fire*. . . . (Oct. 13): To-night was the fireman's procession in honor of the Prince of Wales. I went to Mr. (George Ward) Nichol's studio with Cousin Lizzie Burwell to see Brown's picture, which the Prince has accepted. He expected the Prince there but he did not come. I stayed and saw somebody a great deal better, viz: Henry Ward Beecher, with whom I had a charming talk about pictures and music. The way New Yorkers behave about the Prince is disgraceful. We boast of being Republicans, yet show ourselves servile fools before a Title!

(Oct. 21): "I have heard of a splendid compliment Mr. Beecher paid me, which made me not *vain* but *proud*. He said I had 'a perfectly queenly face, and intellect and soul enough to supply four dozen ordinary women'— Wasn't I glad and proud! . . . (Oct. 23): A letter from Jim, from Baltimore. The dear boy is enjoying himself very much—says the Latrobes are so kind to him, and every one in the house seems to like him. . . . (Oct. 25): Mr. Rowse asked me again to sit for my portrait and I consented. . . . (Oct. 31): To Mr. Page's studio—where he talked Swedenborgianism and art.—Wrote to Jimmie. I miss him so terribly! (Nov. 2): Mrs. Putnam to lunch. Mr. Nichols printed a criticism of mine on Roger's new statue, 'The Fairy's Whisper.'

(Tues., Nov. 6): "Election Day! Father and Will got up early to vote before breakfast.—Why hasn't an enlightened human being, calling itself a woman, as much right to an opinion of who is best to govern her, as the ignorant Irishman, whose vote can be bought or sold? . . . (Nov. 8): Father, as usual, to the Athenæum Club.—Why don't I get a letter from dear Jimmy? . . . (Tues. Nov. 13): Mr. Beecher's sermon is printed—all about the great Republican triumph. He says there are three great dates in American History: the landing of the Pilgrims, the 4th of July, and Nov. 6, 1860. He forgot to say the 2nd of December, 1859, when the martyr chief, John Brown, died with sublime calmness for Liberty.

GEORGE INNESS; COOPER INSTITUTE: O. B. FROTHINGHAM;
"JIM'S STUDIO"

(Nov. 15): "I stopped into Mr. Nichols' rooms to get my umbrella, and there sat George Inness—weak and prostrated after his late ill-

* During the preceding winter and spring, they had resided temporarily in a rented house, at 84 East 18th St.

ness, but with clear eyes looking at his new picture which was placed before him. . . . This evening, while I was sitting alone in the parlour, singing at the piano, the bell rang, and in a moment Jim came into the room, singing. Oh, how I jumped into his arms and kissed him a thousand times. He is my *own, own* brother, my darling, my sympathizing comfort. God bless and preserve him!

(Nov. 16, 1860): "This morning, darling Jim showed us some of the sketches he made in Maryland. Then we took a long walk. Tonight, he and I sat in the parlour, after the rest had gone up stairs, and he told me about his plans for this winter—many brave resolutions for a high and noble life. . . . (Nov. 17): Jim went to Hastings. It is terrible to lose him again. . . . (Nov. 19): Aunt Sarah Alling and Aunt Jennie Burwell came from Tuckahoe. Jim came home. We went to the Cooper Institute to hear Beecher—who said he saw on banners: 'The Union for the *Sake* of the Union?' Now *he* loved the Union for the sake of Liberty and Justice; but if the Union wasn't possible without violating these laws, then it had better be a thousand times dissolved. Even squirrels, he said, know enough not to hoard nuts after the meat is out.

(Nov. 20): "Emmy and I to see Jim's new studio, in Mr. Nichols' building (on 8th St.). He has just got into it.—With Jim to see Miss Cushman in *Meg Merriles*. . . . (Nov. 24): To the French Exhibition. There was Father with Mr. Beecher, who was as full of fun as a rollicking school boy. Saw some Troyon Paintings. This eve. Miss Whitney and Miss Margaret Sedgewick to dine. . . . (Nov. 25): A fine sermon by Mr. O. B. Frothingham. . . . (Nov. 26): To Jim's studio. He came out with me for lunch and we ate a mince pie together, *gourmands que nous sommes!* This evening, I sang to Mr. Rowse—Handel's *Angels Ever Bright and Fair*, Schubert's *Eulogy of Tears*, Stigelli's *Die Träne*, and Beethoven's *Adelaide*. . . . (Nov. 27): This evening Jim and I sat alone in the dining-room, he drawing and I reading.

BUCHANAN, DU CHAILLOU, FORT SUMTER, MAJOR ANDERSON,
SEVENTH REGIMENT

(Dec. 4): "The President's message is out—not only feeble and puerile, but disgustingly false and insolent. But what else might be expected from James Buchanan! . . . (Dec. 6): To the Aspinwall Gallery: good pictures—Ringdaels, a Guercino, Berghen and a Murillo; then to see a new picture by Inness. . . . (Sun., Dec. 9): To Dr. Bellow's church* with Jimmy. . . . (Dec. 12): To Jimmy's studio. He went with Emmy and me to the rehearsal—Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. This evening, with Jimmy to Mr. Longfellow's fair at the 2nd Unitarian Church, Brooklyn. Many pleasant faces reminded us of old Brooklyn times. . . . (Jan. 3, 1861): All the family to hear Du Chaillou lecture on Africa. Instructive and amusing. He doesn't believe at all that man was ever an ape—or ever will be!

* "Dear Saidie," wrote *Phoebe Cary*, "will you be good enough to lend me a copy of the hymn-book used in the Unitarian Church, and oblige your friend always."

(Jan. 5): "*The 'Star of the West' has gone with 300 men to Fort Sumter, to reinforce Major Anderson. . . .* (Jan. 10): The news is that the *Star of the West* was fired into by the Southerners at Fort Moultrie, and put out to sea. Every one predicts war. To fire into an unarmed vessel—what more detestable! This enrages the North and unites it in spirit.—To the artists' reception at Dodworth's. . . . (Jan. 11): To Jim's studio. He has commenced a picture of the Newport beach that is really fine. . . . (Jan. 19): Jimmy and I to the Brooklyn Philharmonic. . . . (Feb. 9): Jim took me to the Theatre Français. We saw *Le Courier de Lyons*. . . . (Mar. 1): With Mr. Eastman Johnson to the news boys' lodgings. . . . (Apr. 9): Felt sick. Jimmy was going out with the rest to Bruno Wollenhaupt's concert, but he stayed to console me. He and I had a long talk about dear mother and wept in doing so. Poor precious boy—he and I have felt *such* a need for a mother. What should we do without each other! . . . (Apr. 11): A high fever. Sore throat. Dr. Warner came. . . . (Apr. 12): *The news is that war has begun*, and Fort Sumter has been attacked, but they may be but rumors. . . . (Apr. 13): Not able to leave my room. Fort Sumter has been reinforced.—Everyone is excited.—It brought me a new fever.

(Mon., Apr. 15): "News verified of surrender of Fort Sumter—Major Anderson coming on to N. Y. with his men in the Steamer *Isabel*. He fought bravely from Friday morning till Saturday night, but reinforcements did not arrive in time. The Secessionists are crowing. Ah, *nous verrons!* The President has issued a Proclamation for 200,000 men. Great excitement everywhere. . . . (Tues., Apr. 16): All day in my room. Major Anderson arrived this evening late. A great mass of people have gone about all to-day to the Secession Newspaper offices and required them to show the Stars and Stripes. The Herald has had to do so. Every omnibus has its flag; horses of the commonest carts have their heads flag-draped. This war is born of our great national sin—how sure are God's judgments!

(Thur., Apr. 18): "I went out to-day for the first time. The excitement is intense—thousands of young men volunteering. The troops from Massachusetts * passed through here this morning on their way to Washington. As they passed, amid vociferous cheering, every face was grave and solemn. They looked stern and invincible—strong, well built fellows, many from the most cultivated families in Massachusetts, with revolutionary blood in their veins. A young man from Boston said that almost all these 'Massachusetts boys' are Abolitionists, who see in this war the extermination of slavery and have been waiting years for it. They go not for self-interest, not for plunder—not for glory—not for fun—but for principle, for God. It was this gave them their solemn expression—of a purpose so holy that at times

* "At Eleventh Street and Broadway," wrote Augustus Saint-Gaudens, in his *Reminiscences*, "from my lathe at a window I saw the New England volunteers on their way to the Civil War—a spectacle profoundly impressive, as they all sang *John Brown's Body*, tramping by."

it awed the crowd. God help them in the divine cause that shall work the regeneration, not only of America but of the world!

(Fri., Apr. 19): "This afternoon, at 2½ o'clock, we went to a store, 542 Broadway, to see the 7th regiment go off. Broadway was the theatre of a rarely exampled scene: From every window the flag floated. As far as the eye could see, uptown and down, stars and stripes hung across the street—from Fourteenth Street to the Battery, a solid mass of people—all wearing cockades. . . . Any stranger could have told it was no holiday. Even the little boys were solemn. Groups were talking earnestly—soberly. Just before the 7th Regiment passed, Father came in from down town, with the latest news by telegraph, and told us that the Boston troops had been attacked by a mob at Baltimore and several killed, names yet unknown: that Lieut. Jones had marched to Harpers Ferry and blown up the arsenal there. This news was soon cried through the streets, and the crowd seemed agitated almost beyond control. A young man, below on the sidewalk, cried: 'Boys, we'll revenge every dead Boston boy!' Such exclamations everywhere. In the midst, Major Anderson appeared on the balcony at Ball and Black's, in his uniform. Every one knew him by instinct, and there rose a unanimous shout of welcome and cheering. Very soon after, we heard *Hail Columbia!* in the distance, and the Seventh appeared.

"News of the Baltimore mob had reached them and they had stopped to take more cannon. When the news first reached their drilling rooms in 4th Ave., they say, it was a thrilling scene. They were roused to a fearful spirit of energy. They marched with kindling eyes down Broadway, amid cheers that welled unceasingly to the heavens, while thousands of handkerchiefs and flags floated from the windows. Joe and Sam Curtis, among them, saw us at the window—looked up and smiled, raising their hats. Benjamin Rankin sent his good-bye through Father. . . . Heavens! How my blood tingled, and I found myself crying 'Hurrah!' with the great crowd without knowing it. I felt on fire to go myself. From my heart went up to God as fervent a prayer as ever was offered. I must *do* something! . . . There is a rumour this evening that Jeff. Davis is within 24 hours of Washington with an immense army. Lincoln, once inaugurated, finds the administration in the corruptest state. Things look dark.

(Sat., Apr. 20): "This afternoon to the Union Place Hotel to see the mass meeting on Union Square, called by the principal citizens. An outpouring in favour of the perpetuity of that 'Union of States—hearts and hands' which called our government into being! . . . A Herculean task to attempt a description: the people pouring out in thousands; cannon, drums, flags in the breeze, crowds rushing toward Union Square from up and down town; gorgeously dressed soldiers, the national music filling all the air: Broadway almost hidden in flagging: window, housetop, awning, stage, railroad car, hotel and Liberty pole; old white-headed men and little children—from all the Stars and Stripes shining omnipresent!

"A man mounted the statue of Washington and attached to his

bronze hand the very flag that was shot at, on Fort Sumter. The sight of it, torn and smoke-begrimed—seemed to excite the people almost to a frenzy. They raised one universal thrilling cry. A voice cried: 'Three cheers for the men who defended it!' Another: 'Three cheers for the men gone to avenge it! . . . In the midst of this, the veterans of 1812 marched up Broadway through the square, and, as they saw the statue of Washington with the flag in his hand, they straightened themselves with the fire of youth again. Cheer after cheer followed them. But there was nothing so eloquent as the noble statue with outstretched arm, from which the tattered flag of Sumter waved, seeming to invite all Americans to gather again under their stars and stripes to defend them to the death.

"About three o'clock, Major Anderson appeared with his officers on the platform opposite the statue.—The crowd rushed from all parts of the Square in wild enthusiasm: cheers, hats, flags, handkerchiefs showered in the air. Captain Doubleday and Lieutenants Snyder and Sneed, Anderson's officers, came forward and were greeted. There were speeches, but we were too high up to hear. The meeting lasted till dark.—Prof. William Dwight Whitney, Maria's brother, dined with us. . . . At the Philharmonic Concert this evening, the *Lieder-kranz* and audience sang the *Star-Spangled Banner*, and cheers were given for the North, Anderson, and the 7th Regiment.

(Apr. 28): "Jim gave us the key to the Crayon Art Gallery and we went to see Col. Ellsworth's Zouaves pass. (May 4): Mr. Rogers, the sculptor, called with Mr. Eastman Johnson. . . . (May 25): A delightful sail on the Hudson with Jim. . . . (May 28): Saw the Garibaldi guard go off, composed of men of all nations. They sing a song, beginning with an invocation to George Washington, saying—though they all speak different languages—the language of Liberty is understood by every heart. . . . (June 24): To Pelham with the Roosevelts. . . . (June 28): This evening, Jim took me to the Central Park, and we rowed on the lake."

EAGLESWOOD: THOREAU, SURVEYOR: MARCUS SPRING, WHITMAN,
ALCOTT, GREELEY

Jim McKaye, then just nineteen, had not yet enlisted. During this year of '61 his time was divided between New York (his father's 19th Street home, and his own studio on 8th Street) and Eagleswood, near Perth Amboy, New Jersey, where he had secured the position of Instructor in Art at the then celebrated Weld School, one of the pioneer co-educational schools in America. During the war this school became the Eagleswood Military Academy. The great estate of Eagleswood was owned by the Quaker philanthropist, Marcus Spring, who had married Miss Rebecca Buffum, daughter of Arnold Buffum, first president of the New England Anti-slavery Society, organized in 1832 at Providence, R. I. With a half-mile frontage on Raritan Bay, Eagleswood included two hundred acres

of white-oak park, overlooked by the stately Mansion House on the bluff.

In some of its transcendental aspects, the early history of this Utopian colony resembled beginnings of the famous "Brook Farm" of Hawthorne and Dana, and the "Fruit Lands" of Harvard, Mass., whose eccentric philosopher, Bronson Alcott (father of Louise Alcott of *Little Women*) had earlier left his New England clime to sojourn awhile at Eagleswood, with the author-naturalist, Henry David Thoreau, whom Marcus Spring engaged to survey his estate there. This early association of the great naturalist with the Quaker, anti-slavery colony of Spring has been little stressed in literary history, but its relation to a pre-Civil War background of American culture is picturesquely significant. This background is especially interesting for its bearing on the "Eagleswood period" of George Inness, on early associations of Thoreau, Walt Whitman and Horace Greeley, as well as for early influences affecting the young manhood of James Steele McKaye, who—soon after the dates of the following letters of Thoreau and Alcott—took personal part in the associations therein described. Addressing his sister, Sophia Thoreau, at Concord, Mass., Henry D. Thoreau wrote home: *

"Eagleswood, Nov. 1, 1856.—Dear Sophia. . . . This is a queer place. There is one large long stone building, which cost some \$40,000, a few shops and offices, an old farmhouse, and Mr. Spring's perfectly private residence, within twenty rods of the main building.—The city of Perth Amboy is about as big as Concord, and Eagleswood is one and a quarter miles southwest of it, on the Bay side. The central fact here is evidently Mr. (Theodore) Weld's school, recently established.

"Saturday eve, I went to the schoolroom, to see the children, their teachers and patrons dance. Mr. Weld, a kind-looking man with a long white beard, Mr. Spring and others danced with them.—Sunday, I attended there a sort of Quaker meeting (Mrs. Spring says, 'Does thee not?'), where it was expected the Spirit would move me; it did—an inch or so. I said just enough to make it lively. . . . The children are the greater part. Imagine them sitting close to the wall, all around a hall. There sat the elderly Mrs. Weld, in extreme Bloomer costume; Mr. Arnold Buffum, with broad face and great white beard, looking like a pier-head made of the cork-tree with the bark on, as if he could buffet a considerable wave; James G. Birney,† formerly

* Quoted from the *Familiar Letters of Thoreau*, edited by F. B. Sanborn, page 286.

† Father of Colonel William Birney, under whom young McKaye served as officer of colored troops, in '63. See page i, 97.

candidate for the Presidency, with another white beard; Edward Palmer, the anti-money man (for whom communities were made)—very worthy people. . . . Ever since, I have been engaged in surveying Eagleswood—through woods, salt marshes, bushes, mud, burs and beggar-ticks. . . . Mr. Spring wants me to help him set out an orchard and vineyard; Mr. Alcott says Greeley invites him and me to his home, over Sunday. . . . The hardest thing to find here is solitude. I am at Mr. Spring's house. Both he and she and their family are quite agreeable. . . . (Just left off to talk French with the servant man.)”

(Nov. 19): “I have read three of my lectures to the Eagleswood people, with rare success. . . . Alcott has been here three times, and I went with him to Greeley's farm. Next day, Alcott and I heard Beecher preach; we visited Whitman and were much interested and provoked. . . . He is apparently the greatest democrat the world has seen. He told me he loves to ride up and down Broadway all day on an omnibus, sitting beside the driver, listening to the roar of the carts, and declaiming Homer at the top of his voice. . . . Love from Henry.

“The date of this visit to Eagleswood,” comments Frank Sanborn of Concord, “is worthy of note, because Thoreau then made the acquaintance of Walt Whitman.—‘Three men,’ said Emerson, in his funeral eulogy of Thoreau, ‘have strongly impressed Mr. Thoreau: Walt Whitman, Joe Polis (his Indian guide in Maine) and John Brown.’”

ABOLITIONISTS AND ARTISTS: JOHN BROWN, FREDERICA
BREMER, INNESS AND PAGE

John Brown, the martyr of Ossawatimie, during the last months of his life, was warmly befriended by Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Spring. After his famous fight at Harpers Ferry, they personally nursed him, and after his imprisonment at Charlestown, Va., they welcomed his wife and sister into their own home at Eagleswood. From Charlestown prison, Nov. 23, 1859, John Brown wrote to Mrs. Spring:

“I would most gladly express my gratitude to you and yours by something more than words. You have laid me and my family under many and great obligations. *I hope they may not soon be forgotten.*”

The foregoing references of Thoreau and John Brown are to persons nearly all friends of young James Steele McKaye. At Eagleswood, he knew intimately the elders and taught some of the very children described by Thoreau. “*For John Brown*” he had given a share of his pocket-money.* Of Horace Greeley he made later a statuette, by photosculture.†

* Cf. page i, 63. † Reproduced as illustration in Chapter IV.

"Henry Thoreau," wrote Bronson Alcott in his diary (Nov. 7, '56), "arrives from Eagleswood, and sees John Swinton, a wise young Scotchman and Walt Whitman's friend, at my room (15 Laight St.). Thoreau declining to accompany me to Mrs. Botta's parlours, as invited by her—he sleeps here."

So, too, in this excerpt from Alcott, the persons referred to—John Swinton, the "wise young Scotchman," radical labour leader, later a devotee of my father,* Beecher, Alice Cary, etc.—were frequent guests at young McKaye's home in 19th Street. At this time doubtless began his and his sister's acquaintance with Walt Whitman, referred to in later chapters;† and at "Mrs. Botta's parlours" he was soon after to meet Henry M. Alden, of Harper's, and James K. Medbery, as recorded in this chapter.

All these literary *dramatis personæ* were represented also at the home and "colony" of Marcus Spring. Here for years, under his hospitality, Eagleswood was a focus of radical and original ideas in art and politics, where Abolitionists, religionists and artists were informally associated in a ferment of the pre-war and war spirit. Here in the early 'Sixties, George Inness and William Page had their studios. Here Fredericka Bremer, the Swedish novelist, made her home while visiting America.

Here, then, while himself teaching art ("impatient because he could not make artists of all his pupils"), McKaye was again, as earlier in Newport, immersed in kindling ideas—an apostle of Wendell Phillips (whom he "nearly idolized for his intense, still power"), and a pupil of William Page and of George Inness. ‡

"J. S. MCKAYE, 1861": EMERSON, SWEDENBORG; DRAMATIC EXERCISES;
STUDIES IN EMOTION AND PANTOMIME

In a notebook, signed "James S. McKaye, Feb., 1861," is glimpsed an Eagleswood influence from the kindred there of John Brown, who was a dealer in wool.

* Cf. on page i, 173, McKaye and Swinton, in 1872.

† Cf. Saidie McKaye's parody of the poet (on page i, 171), and the theatre benefit proffered to Whitman by Steele McKaye, thirty years later (page ii, 163).

‡ "George Inness and your father," wrote my mother to me (1911), "used to paint together often, and then talk over things."—On one such occasion, to illustrate certain ideas of his, regarding composition, Inness painted for my father a watercolor sketch, which he signed and gave to him. The sketch is herewith reproduced, in this chapter. The three perpendicular lines are due to creases in the paper, from having been folded—perhaps to be thrust into a pocket, or wallet—while master and pupil discussed "composition" and the cosmos.

The book contains—Aphorisms, Proverbs, Comments on the Nervous System, Money Calculations about *sheep raising and the wool business* in California; expenses for Hamlet, Mephistopheles, Othello costumes; for sketching supplies; for trip “to Weehauken and Vespers,” and “to Barnum’s Museum.”

Another notebook, “July, 1861,” contains many notes by J. S. M. himself, mingled with quotations from Emerson, Swedenborg, etc., under these headings: “Nature, Transcendental Thought, Commodity, Beauty, The Poet, Essays, First Steps into the Land of Thought, Ethics, On the Relation between Earth and Man, Study of Style, German Poetry”—and this conundrum:

“Why will our President conquer secession?”

“Because he is Abe L. (able) to do it.”

A third notebook, “J. S. McKaye, 1861,” contains *The Land of Hate, A Dream, and To my Sister on the Day of the Anniversary of our Mother’s Death* (June 28th); verses by J. S. M.; extracts from Pope, Tennyson, Wordsworth; *Definitions and Distinctions*; quotations from *Hamlet, Richard III, Othello, The Tempest, Proverbs* (7 pages, alphabetically arranged); *Historical Conclusions* (from French History); *Regulations of Time; Contemplations by J. S. M.*”

These “Contemplations” are entitled: “What is a Nation? Nature. Will. On the War. The Artist. The Landscape of Emotion. Geniuses. Wordly Thoughts. Curiosity and Hard Thinking. Passing Thoughts from the Ideal World.” From the last this is an excerpt:

“One of the essential elements in manhood is independence of all except itself and source. . . . Men who have power of expression, or gift of creation, should remember they are but the servants of humanity, interpreting between them and their God, thus gaining food for them. . . . Express boldly to yourself what you feel and think; seek a scientific system by which you can raise the weighty lid that burdens your spiritual eye and prevents it from looking into that world which is the reality of which we dream. . . . Whoever enters an unknown road in a fog may easily lose himself. That very chance is more agreeable than a road where one knows every tree. Danger and novelty are more entertaining than safety and sameness.

“A little hard thinking will supply the place of a great deal of reading, and will lead to conclusions which it would take a volume to establish. Think over a subject before you read upon it: then observe after what manner it has occurred to the mind of some great master. . . . It is a superior habit of some minds to refer all particular truths to other truths more general; so their knowledge is beautifully methodised: at once the general truth suggests all particular exemplifications, or any exemplification leads to the general truth. . . . Troubles are like burs and briars in a field: if we but walk out of the trodden path, they stick and scratch us on all sides. . . . Geniuses have the unhappy

7th REGIMENT

Amusement Association !

FORT FEDERAL HILL,

Baltimore, Aug. 15th, 1862.

THE REGIMENTAL BAND

Under the leadership of PROF. GRAFFULLA and led by the following in music

OVERTURE - Fra Diavolo
ALLS WELL
POLKA BENDOWA
WALTZ
GRAFFULLA
KUHNER

After the manner of the 7th Regt. 6th Corps. 1st Div. 1st Army.

HAMLET!

HAMLET... JAMES MCKAYE
GHOST... J. D. OULACER
HORATIO... E. A. SPRING
MARCELLUS... D. C. KINGSLAND

Musical Interlude

ALL PERFORMER Anna Perkins... BELLINA
A. E. VALENTINE
COMIC SONG... E. F. ROBERTS
VIRAVISO Anna Schumann... BELLINA
A. E. VALENTINE

BOX AND COX!

Mr. BOX... E. F. ROBERTS
Mr. COX... D. S. MANN
Mrs. ROESCHER... D. SCOTT JR.

TATTOO!

Drum Major Graham.

JOHN H. BIRD. Stage Manager.



FORD'S THEATRE, WASHINGTON

(Photo, 15 April, 1865. Page 110.)



JOHN T. FORD

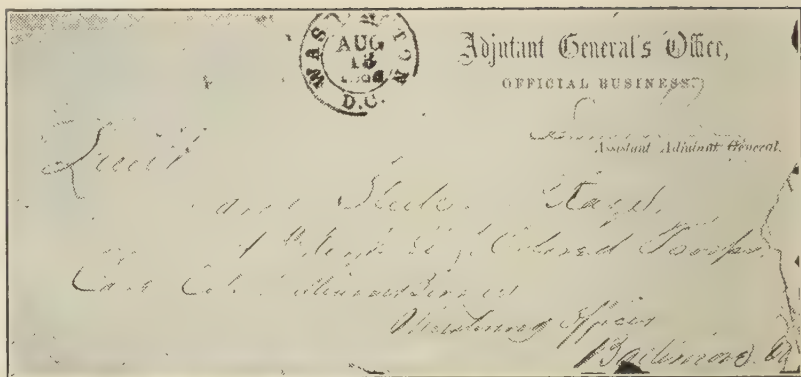
Manager of Ford's Theatre
(Photo, 1865. Pages 95, 322.)

PROGRAMME

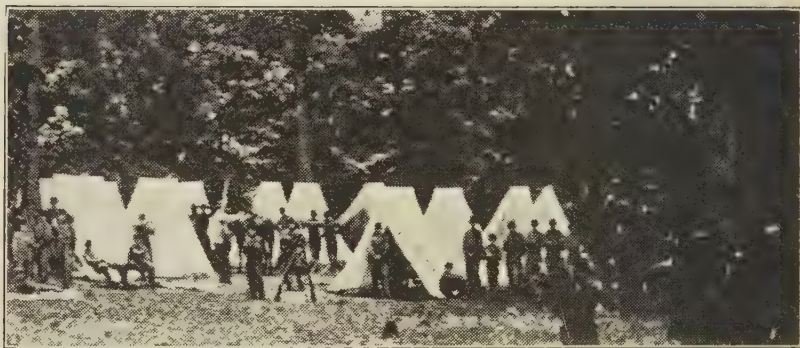
(Page 95.)

At the age of 20, James Steele McKaye made his first public appearance on the stage, as a soldier in the 7th Regiment, at Baltimore. There, when he acted Hamlet, August 15, 1862, Manager John T. Ford offered him the position of "leading juvenile" in his theatre, after the expiration of his army duties.

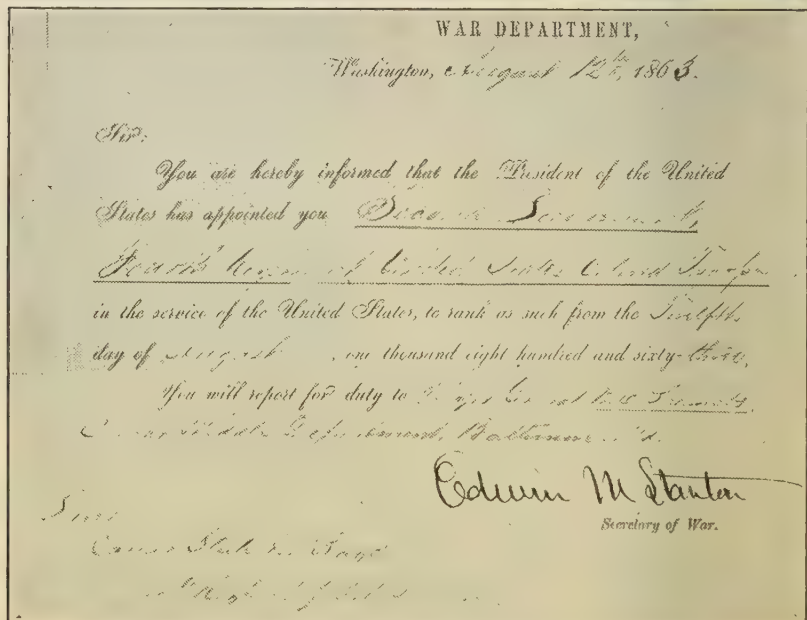
I.



II.



I.



I. WAR COMMISSION OF JAMES STEELE MCKAYE (Excerpt), 1863

II. NORTHERN ARMY TRAINING CAMP (Weld Military School, Photo, 1862)
(One of these young men may be J. S. McKaye. Pages 97-98.)

knack of seeing connections, humorous or awful, between the most seemingly antipodal things. . . . The great philosopher aims to reconcile every disadvantage by some counterbalancing good.—*Where he cannot create this he should imagine it.* . . . The facts of nature are all equal in worth; there is no arrogant conscription of power between its different members: it is truly democratic.

"The true poet gives nature a new meaning. He often finds a dearest tie between the very sounds of words and those harmonies that are the magnetism of nature, attracting all minor dependent wills to the great moral Will—the essence of tenderness itself. . . . The poet is a prophet because, taking the fact and finding the cause, he foretells the effect. . . . The poet is the peacemaker because, revealing the relations of man to creation, he binds men together by ties invisible to the more material mirror, but strong as the universe itself.

"The searching passion of a yearning soul separates dross from gold. All the instruments of history and philosophy are its allies: it uses science, burns away nature into gas, and dissolves gas into idea. . . . We do not desire enough, reflect enough—draw the sword of energy and with the shield of fortitude spring up to overcome all barriers of circumstance, grasp the meaning of life, gain self-possession. O, the infinite satisfaction of soul consciousness, the sublime strength of faith in the spirit, the ecstasy of comprehending our relation to the Eternal, the Father!"

In the following self-imposed schedule is evident the strong inward pull which the pictorial artist felt toward the art of the actor. Here is no moment's interim, even to snatch a hasty lunch, before plunging from the painter's easel into dramatic exercises:

"Pantomime and Expression: 1861

Regulations of Time:

From 10:00 o'clock	till 2:00 o'clock—	Drawing and Painting.
" 2:00 "	" 4:00 "	Dramatic Exercises.
" 2:00 "	" 2:20 "	Exercise—Voice.
" 2:20 "	" 2:40 "	" Body.
" 2:40 "	" 3:00 "	" In Pantomime.
" 3:00 "	" 3:20 "	" In Calisthenics.
" 3:20 "	" 3:40 "	" In Emotional Ex-
" 3:40 "	" 4:00 "	pressions of Coun-
		tenance.
		" Miscellaneous.
" 7:½ "	" 9:½ "	2 Evenings in week: Specialty."

This record of "dramatic exercises," in 1861, is important to a true understanding of my father's later contributions to æsthetic philosophy and to the art of the theatre. Prevented at the start, by his father's opposition, from adopting the stage itself as a career, he gave himself, during more than a decade, to intensive

training in bodily and facial exercises, while his mind was constantly analysing and synthesising the whole field of æsthetic expression which underlay these. So he evolved both an æsthetic philosophy and a means for its practical embodiment through the invention of innumerable co-ordinating exercises. These pursuits had begun even as a boy; but here, in 1861, he had already commenced with himself an intensive régime in pantomime and æsthetic expression—*eight years before he had even heard of Delsarte.*

The extraordinary fervor with which, in the early '70's, he launched the name and fame of Delsarte in America tinged for some years his own authentic work in that field with connotations of a foreign master which were often wholly irrelevant and served to handicap his own creative ideas by erroneous implications of a derived origin—implications which he was often embarrassed to disavow because of his ardent devotion to Delsarte and his noble memory. This will more fully appear during the course of these pages.* Meantime, this schedule of 1861 is significant in relation to the contents of another note-book, "James McKaye, February 7, 1862," filled extensively with detailed studies and analyses of expression, from which the following is an excerpt:

"SOURCES OF EXPRESSION: 1862

"In the expression of the passions there is a compound influence at work. Let us contemplate the appearance of terror: Eye intently fixed upon the object of his fear; the eyebrows elevated to the utmost; the eye largely uncovered; with hesitating and bewildered steps, his eyes wildly and rapidly in search of something. . . . Observe him further: a spasm in his breast; the muscles of his neck and shoulders in action, his breath short and rapid; there is a convulsive motion of his lips, a tremor on his hollow cheek, a gulping and catching of his throat. His heart knocks at his ribs while yet there is no circulation, for his lips and cheeks are ashy pale. . . .

"In fainting, or approaching death, the four voluntary muscles of the eye resign their action, insensibility creeps over the retina, the oblique muscles prevail, the pupil is revolved so as only to expose the white of the eye. In laughing and crying, the outer circle of the *orbicularis* contracts, gathers up the skin about the eye and simultaneously compresses the eyeball. . . .

"To preserve the dignity of his character, the actor must permit to escape only those *uncontrollable* signs of suffering which betray how much he feels and how much he restrains. . . . In the countenance of Mrs. Siddons, or of Mr. John Kemble, there was presented the highest character which belongs to the true English face. In

* Cf., especially page ii, 270, and the statements of Sargent and Curry, on page i, 457.

that family the upper lip and nostrils were especially expressive: and both these great tragedians had extraordinary capacity for expressing the nobler passions. . . . The most remarkable muscle of the human face is the *corrugator supercilii*, arising from the frontal bone near its union with the nasal bones and inserted into the skin of the eyebrow. It knits the eyebrows with an energetic effect which unaccountably but irresistibly conveys the idea of mind. . . .

"The motion of the face next most expressive of human passion is seen in the angle of the mouth. At one time I conceived that distinctive expression was owing to the *superbus*, which elevates and protrudes the under lip, but I was deceived. . . . The character of human expression in the mouth is given by the *tri-angularis oris* or *deprepar angulis oris*, a muscle which I have not found in any animal. I believe it to be peculiar to man; and I can assign no other use for it than that which belongs to expression. It arises from the base of the lower jaw, and passes up to be inserted—with the converging fibres of almost all the muscles of the side of the face—into the corner of the mouth. It produces that arching of the lip so expressive of contempt, hatred, jealousy, and—in conjunction with that elevation of the under lip, or *superbus*, and the *obicularis*—it has a larger share than any other muscle in producing the infinite variety of motions of the mouth expressive of sentiment. . . .

"All men are philosophers, all women actresses. It is only at the theatre that they lose these divine gifts."

At Eagleswood, while young McKaye was thus analysing human expression, and teaching art at the Weld School, he became acquainted there with Miss Jennie Spring, the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Spring, who were prominent among those devotees of Abolition and art who used to meet at Col. McKaye's house in New York. It was doubtless through them that the Colonel's son, "Jim," the autumn after his return from Paris, secured his teaching position at Eagleswood, where he instructed the proprietor's talented young daughter in drawing, sculpture and painting.

Brought up there in that atmosphere of transcendental ideals and radical mysticism which has been suggested in these pages, Jennie Spring was a girl of fine aspirations and warmly enthusiastic nature. To these traits, congenial with those of her young instructor, were added an ardent love of the theatre, so that they were soon taking part together in private theatricals, held on a stage especially constructed, under his direction, in the school building. There young McKaye acted a number of leading parts, *Mephistopheles* in *Faust*, *Claude*, *Prince of Como*, in *The Lady of Lyons*, and numerous Shakespearean title rôles.

In the spring of '62, however, the accelerating drama of war broke up these amateur dramatics, and he left them to enlist in the Northern ranks, where he was "sworn in" on June 20, '62, at Baltimore. There, substituting for a sick soldier, he joined, as a private, the famous Seventh Regiment of New York, which at the opening of the war he and his sister, Saidie, had watched as it marched down Broadway, wearing their grey-coated uniforms of "The National Guard," following the soul of John Brown "marching on."

Amid such dramatic emotions of youth and war, Jim McKaye became engaged to Jennie Spring, to whom, while stationed at camp, ten days after his enlistment, he was married, June 30th, at Philadelphia. On the same day he returned to his regiment in Baltimore. He was then just twenty. His bride was nineteen. It was an impulsive, war-time match, which afterwards eventuated in their divorce and in remarriage on both their parts. It led, however, to no lack of mutual good-will or esteem, and their son, my half-brother Arthur—born at Eagleswood, and nursed there in his infancy by the sister of John Brown of Ossawatimie—was later a welcome and beloved fellow-member of our family household, fondly mothered by my own mother.*

7TH REGIMENT: HAMLET, ANTONIO, CASSIUS, SHYLOCK, MACBETH

The Seventh Regiment, stationed at Fort Federal Hill, Baltimore, waited several months for orders to move to the front. To break the monotony of camp life the soldiers formed "The Seventh Regiment Amusement Association," whose activities were long afterwards thus recorded in the New York Tribune:

"A stage was built within the hollow square, formed by the wings of the barracks. There on 'acting nights,' the trees of the parade ground blazed with Chinese lanterns. The scene presented the guise of a fashionable ball, for the audience of soldiers in dress-uniform were all volunteers from among the first New York families, and their fair guests in crinoline, escorted by gleaming tophats, were drawn from the best society of Baltimore.—For the evening of August 2nd, 1862, festal preparations ushered a scene from *Othello*, in which James Steele McKaye played *Othello* and John H. Bird *Iago*. Followed by a musical interlude, the evening ended with dancing and refreshments, while

* On my mother's death (May 14, 1924), Arthur wrote to all of us, her children: "In my heart, as in yours, is a great sorrow at our loss—the end of a life overflowing with love and devotion. Mary Medbery MacKaye is at rest. To me she has always been the personification of perfect motherhood. Throughout practically all of my boyhood and young manhood she was to me a loving and devoted mother, so that I have thought of her as 'Mother,' with the love and respect due to my own."

Grafulla's Band played under the moonlit leaves, and the marching tread of passing regiments, going to the front, accompanied the dancers' feet.

"Growing ambitious, the Association on August 8th rendered *The Merchant of Venice*, in which J. S. McKaye acted *Antonio*.—After this, the whole regiment became stage-struck, the members spouting their parts at mess. Shakespeare's works were in demand, and *Julius Cæsar* was soon given, with J. S. McKaye as *Cassius*. The next production was remembered by Baltimore society as the most brilliant dramatic affair ever given in their midst. On the evening of August 15, 1862, the curtain rose on a performance of *Hamlet* *, with J. S. McKaye as the Melancholy Dane."

Among the Baltimore spectators of this performance was John T. Ford, manager of Ford's Theatre in Washington, where, three years later, Lincoln was shot. Manager Ford was so taken with the young soldier's *Hamlet* that he offered him a professional acting engagement in his own theatre, as soon as "Jim" McKaye's army commission should expire. Though this engagement as actor never eventuated, yet, nearly twenty years afterward, Ford negotiated the first Baltimore engagement of "Steele" MacKaye's play, *Hazel Kirke*.†

In all of these army-camp dramatics McKaye was a leading spirit, popular with his comrades. Of *The Merchant of Venice* performance his wife wrote to him, from Eagleswood:

"I am rejoiced at your success in the rôle of *Antonio*, because I did not think you could do much in such a quiet part—for you and thunder storms and Niagara are a good deal alike. . . . Do arrange to act *Macbeth*, or *Shylock*. Your *Macbeth* is my favourite of all you do. . . . Mr. Page has returned from West Point, where he has been painting General Scott. Last evening Mrs. Page and I sat on their piazza in the moonlight, while Mr. Page read some of Lowell's finest poems to us, lighted by a candle set just inside the door. . . . By the way, have you written to Willie James yet?—He will be just the person to join, heart and soul, in all your plans with Inness."

"INCO-ORDINATED ROMANTIC IDEAS"

His ardent boyhood friendship with his Newport chum, "Willie" James, from whom he had so unwillingly parted for his first trip to France in '58, had been continued by correspondence and meetings during the interval. Nearly fifty years later, Prof. William James wrote me, in 1908, from Cambridge:

* The fourth and fifth scenes of Act I. The Programme is here reproduced as an illustration, in this chapter.

† Cf. on page i, 322, Manager Ford's "letter" about MacKaye to the public of Baltimore.

"How well I remember your father, at about his twentieth year, effervescing with inco-ordinated romantic ideas of every description!"

During an epoch to follow that time, my father's "romantic ideas" were to become co-ordinated in a notable fusion of arts. Now amid war he was still groping toward that future synthesis. Taking his "palette knife from among his theatrical costumes," he is described then as sketching his comrades and surroundings; and there is a glimpse of him sitting in a woodshed sketching, while reciting aloud some verses ("by G. L. T."), clipped from the New York Tribune, beginning:

*"We learn at last, as learn we must
In deeper agony and dust,
God's mandate to our guilty state—
Emancipate! Emancipate!"*

During this first enlistment, McKaye was taken seriously ill with malarial fever. In camp he had a pet grey squirrel, named Pixy, which had become the regimental mascot. When the Seventh Regiment returned to New York, McKaye insisted upon rising from his sick bed and taking his place in the ranks. Here the squirrel perched on his shoulder and, as the regiment marched up Broadway, the little frisking animal galloped back and forth over the soldiers' knapsacks, to the diversion of the cheering line of march.

During the period of his recuperation, he made a brief sketching trip with George Inness and young William James to Mount Desert, where he was interested in getting impressions of "splendid storm scenes" for a series of paintings by him, illustrating Kingsley's poem, *The Three Fishers*. On his return to New York, he was enthusiastic there over the acting of Ristori, Edwin Booth and Matilda Heron. Meantime he was expressing himself in a notebook under the heading, *Thoughts on Art—1862*:

"Soul is the source of beauty and order. The artist who undertakes to render nature accurately must grasp this universal spirit that moves upon the face of deep, religious mystery, or his creations have no value. . . . In so far as the particular reveals the universal, it is good and lovely; but when it is unmeaning, it is wicked and adulterates the spirit of purity in the picture.

"Nature lies in the world of sense. In painting what his senses reveal, the artist cheats humanity if he does not, through the sense of others, bestow upon his fellows something out of sense intelligent and eternal. . . . All servitude arises from thoughtlessness. For

freedom we must think, seek after omnipotent truth. . . . Our mind enables us to approach the Central Mind of all thought. The influx of Him is the source of all our power, the moulder of our circumstance, the creator of our characters."

OFFICER OF COLOURED TROOPS

Upon his full recovery, he re-enlisted as a volunteer; but this time his zeal for Abolition led him—like that young Col. Shaw whom Saint-Gaudens has immortalised in bronze on Boston Common—to choose service with the enslaved race. On August 12, 1863, he received his commission (from Secretary of War Stanton), appointing him "Second Lieutenant, Fourth Regiment, United States Coloured Troops," under "Major General R. C. Schinck, County Middle Dept., Baltimore, Md." At the time he was already a staff officer ("lieutenant") of that regiment, assisting the mustering officer, Col. William Birney, in raising coloured troops. From camp he wrote in a letter to his wife at Eagleswood, dated "Midnight, Headquarters, 4th Regt., Col. T., Baltimore; July 28, 1863":

"I am 'officer of the day,' and that is officer of the *night* also. I am obliged to stay up all night, to see that the guards do their duty and all the camp is quiet. . . . Druid Hill Park is but a few steps from where I drill every day and occasionally make little speeches to my company. After the regiment leaves here, it will probably go to Washington, to remain three months, until it has been thoroughly drilled.—The life of a staff officer in Camp or Garrison is charming. He is the intimate friend of the General and lives with him. Sometimes he performs duties which require address, such as interviews with officers of the highest rank, with whom sometimes he forms lasting and very beautiful friendships. Wherever he goes he has his horse and servant. Jerome Barratt, my servant, is a very nice, polite, respectable and obliging man. One of my men, a fine fellow named Richard Walley, was shot to-day by a rebellious drummer boy of the regiment while doing his duty in arresting him for misbehaviour. The boy will probably be hung.

"We have several applicants here for runaway slaves, and we have many slaves in Camp, but it's impossible for slave-holders to remove a slave out of this regiment without taking the life of every member of it first. . . . All positions on Col. Birney's prospective staff are filled. Marcellus Bailey is to be Captain, or Asst. Adjutant General of the brigade. I am to be First Lieutenant or Aide to the General.

"I do not go into this thing because I love it, but from convictions regarding my duty and from no other inclination than grows out of that. The life of a staff officer in the field is perilous and busy. It requires energy, address, courage and quick perceptions. The Aide should know more than the General of matters in and about his brigade, and is obliged to risk more on the field than any other officer.

"I am very well satisfied to be Aide, if I can do anything to help carry out what I think is *the greatest, noblest work of the moment*—namely, *the work of raising coloured troops*. The Emancipation Proclamation can only be made irrevocable by the bravery and blood of this down-trodden race.—Apropos, these troops should not be called negro troops. That is wrong. Why, we have the blood of the best families of Maryland and Virginia in the regiment!—I hope to see Inness's house well under way and the improvements in the school building almost finished. I must go my 'Grand Rounds,' so I will close."

This allusion to "Inness's house" at Eagleswood is pertinent to a reference by Inness's son. In his "Life" of his father, George Inness, Jr., writes:

"When at Eagleswood, many artists congregated around Inness, and he had some pupils, of whom Louis C. Tiffany was one."

James Steele McKaye was another pupil, and—in after years—MacKaye engaged his fellow-student under Inness, Louis C. Tiffany, to decorate two of his New York theatres.

"Many pleasant memories," Mr. Tiffany writes to me, in 1926, "arise from my associations with your father, whom I recall as one of the very promising young men, studying as I did, under George Inness." *

Regarding this Eagleswood period, Mr. George Inness, Jr., wrote to me, in 1924, in response to a letter of mine concerning his task in writing the Life of *his* father:

ANOTHER GLIMPSE: GEORGE INNESS, JR.; POSING FOR
SEVENTH REGIMENT STATUE

"It was an easy task for me, for I had a great subject, as you have in writing of your illustrious father—a man whom, though I knew him only in my very early childhood, I admired immensely, and have grown to feel proud that I had, even in my youth, come in contact with Steele MacKaye.

"My first recollection of him seems to be when he appeared as a dashing young officer at Eagleswood. As a child of ten, I looked upon your father as the handsomest man I had ever seen, and registered a wish to grow up to look like him. From that time on, I saw a good deal of 'Jim' McKaye, as he was known to us.—I can picture him now, as he strolled up the road, an enormous bloodhound at his heels. I remember him also in the studio, in the old factory building down by the river, just back of the school, which was then a Military Academy.

"I think we went to Eagleswood about 1862. We occupied 'the

* Cf. Mr. Tiffany's further statement on page i, 481.

Kirkland House,' while our house was being built by Marcus Spring.—Originally, Eagleswood had been built by a Quaker sect of which Marcus Spring was a member, and there he met Rebecca Buffum, whom he married. Later, when the sect disbanded, Spring bought the property and turned the large building into a school for boys. He then built a brick studio, with the view of securing men to settle there who would create a centre of culture and art. To that end, he went to Medfield, Mass., and induced my father to give up his home there and come to Eagleswood—Marcus Spring to build him a house and take his pay in pictures. Before he moved there, my father visited Eagleswood, and selected a site for his new home. Later, after he had given his large picture, 'Peace and Plenty' (which now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art) in part payment, we all got malarial fever, and moved to Brooklyn.

"I remember my father saying '*Young Jim MacKaye has great stuff in him—more than all the bunch of my other pupils put together*'; and as I followed your father's brilliant career later on, I have come to the conclusion that *my father was a true prophet.*"

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After marching from Baltimore with his regiment to the defence of Washington,* there and elsewhere McKaye served under Col. Birney and rose to the rank of Major. In the field he was chiefly occupied in "running off" horses for the Union Army and breaking them in for service—an adventurous life, in which he showed himself daring and resourceful. Once again, however, seized with malarial fever, he was obliged to return home, spending several weeks in the hospital. While slowly recovering, he made a brief visit to Great Barrington, Mass., where he stayed at the Collins House and did some sketching. In all, he appears to have served in the army about a year. Long afterwards (in 1889), he became a member of Lafayette Post No. 147, G. A. R., of New York; and at St. Louis (Sept., 1882) he gave a lecture on the war, in connection with the Civil War paintings by the American artist, Matt Morgan.

To commemorate those members of the 7th Regiment who died in the Civil War, a bronze statue by J. Q. A. Ward stands in Central Park, on "West Walk," near Central Park West and 67th St. For this statue my father, as a young man, posed in his regimental uniform for his friend, Ward, and the statue bears in its features and form remarkable personal resemblance to my father, as the photograph (reproduced in this chapter) suggests.

* At Washington he expressed great ardour for the acting of Edwin Booth in Shakespeare.

During the war, young McKaye was naturally stirred by the intimate participation in national events of his father, who was New York chairman of the national "underground railway" for negro slaves. Concerning these significant activities, the exhaustive memoirs of his life which Col. McKaye had nearly completed at the time of his death (in Paris, April 6, 1888) would doubtless have contributed some valuable pages to American history. Unfortunately the manuscript of his memoirs was then lost, apparently irrevocably. At that time, his intimate friend, Edward Crane, editor of *The Paris Register*, wrote in the *Register*, concerning the importance of the Colonel's war activities, an editorial obituary, the following excerpt of which is here quoted as a footnote to history:

SPECIAL COMMISSIONER FOR LINCOLN: EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

"During our civil war, Col. James MacKaye was prominent in connection with the Loyal Publication Society and was one of the founders of the Union League Club. Although never holding political office, he was always interested in public matters and was personally acquainted with nearly every American statesman since the time of Andrew Jackson. His correspondence with some of these men has been large and is very valuable. As a writer his style was remarkably clear and forcible, and although he published little during his life, he has left a large quantity of manuscripts, a portion of which he was revising, at the time of his death, for posthumous publication.

"Early in 1862 President Lincoln appointed him one of three secret commissioners * to investigate the condition of the slaves in the South. *This arduous task Colonel MacKaye was the only one to seriously undertake; and in the midst of the great War of Secession he prepared a report from his personal observation, which finally decided President Lincoln to proclaim the emancipation of the negroes. This report was the power which settled the anxious uncertainty of the President, and resulted in the greatest step in United States history.*"

Apropos of this statement, the following reference in a letter of August 2, 1862, written to James Steele McKaye by his wife, while he was in Camp at Baltimore, is especially significant for its date: †

* The other two members of this commission were Robert Dale Owen and Dr. Austin Flint, both of New York City.

† "'It had got to be,' said Mr. Lincoln, 'midsummer, 1862. Things had gone on from bad to worse until . . . I now determined upon the adoption of the emancipation policy and I . . . called a Cabinet meeting upon the subject. This was the last of July, or the first part of the month of August, 1862 (the exact date he could not remember).'"—Page 20 of *Six Months at the White House*, by F. B. Carpenter.

"Many people think that Washington will be taken. The Rebels are strengthening their forces every day, and Lincoln said to a man that asked him if there were any possibility of his seeking him there in a month, 'Why, Jeff Davis will have me out of this before a month.'—*Your father says Lincoln had a paper all written saying that all rebels' slaves were free, and everything we could have hoped, but Seward made such a fool of him—saying he would dissolve the cabinet—and so frightened poor Lincoln that he came out with that miserable statement of his.*" *

Seven weeks *after* this letter, the Emancipation Proclamation was given out by Lincoln—*Sept. 22, 1862*. The "miserable statement of his," cited in this letter, refers to an earlier political statement of Lincoln, marking time, about the first of August, '62. From the date of the letter itself and its definite citation of Col. MacKaye's own statement concerning Lincoln's having "a paper all written," it is evident that Col. MacKaye had intimate inside knowledge concerning the Emancipation Proclamation at least seven weeks *before* the President issued it; thus corroborating the statement of another editorial concerning Col. MacKaye, written soon after his death, by the editor of *The New York World* (April 28, 1888), as follows:

"Col. James MacKaye was one of the heroic figures of his age. The staunch friend of the slave when the negro most needed friends, he stood with Wendell Phillips, Greeley and Sumner for the then unpopular cause of Abolition. . . . During the war, Col. MacKaye had the confidence and esteem of President Lincoln and his Cabinet. This was signally displayed in his selection as a commissioner to investigate the condition of the negroes in the South for the information and guidance of the Government in its course toward slavery and the slaveholders in rebellion. That the mind of Lincoln was influenced by the report of that commission his subsequent action proved.

"As a lawyer, Colonel MacKaye's practice was large and lucrative, but he did not confine himself to law. He early took interest in the development of the express system, and was active in the organisation of Wells, Fargo & Co., the American Express Company and the United States Express Company. Of the last he was President. He was also quick to grasp the possibilities of the electric telegraph. He saw at a glance the value of Morse's invention, and engaged earnestly and persistently in the efforts to utilise it. . . . He was the organiser and President of the American Telegraph Company, and

* Two years later, in retrospect, Lincoln told F. B. Carpenter (cf. Carpenter's book, page 23) concerning this Cabinet meeting of "the last of July, or the first part of August, 1862," that Seward had said to him then: "Now, while I approve the measure, I suggest, sir, that you postpone its issue, until you can give it to the country supported by military success, instead of issuing it, as would be the case now, upon the greatest disasters of the war."

when that company became merged in the Western Union, the latter also sought his services as chief executive officer. This position, however, he declined, on account of ill health, occasioned by his arduous investigations in the southern swamps."

AMERICAN TELEGRAPH PRESIDENT; "*THE BIRTH AND
DEATH OF NATIONS*"

Col. McKaye himself was the "war president" of the American Telegraph Company and in that capacity of chief executive must often have been in direct personal touch by telegraph with the greater chief executive of the nation at the White House. Thus, in his triple capacity as Telegraph President, as Secret Commissioner personally appointed by Lincoln in relation to data for the Emancipation Proclamation, and as New York chairman of the "Underground Railroad," Col. McKaye was in a peculiarly strategic position for confidential conference with Lincoln on matters concerning that immortal document, the proclamation of which Lincoln himself called "the great event of the nineteenth century."

At this very time, while Col. McKaye was chief telegraph executive, young Andrew Carnegie was assistant manager of military railroads and telegraphs, and through him David Homer Bates,* a young telegraph operator, entered government service at Washington, and became cipher operator and manager of the War Dept. Telegraph Office, from April, 1861, till Sept., '66. At the time of Bates' death, in 1926, his obituary stated:

"President Lincoln wrote the first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation at a desk (in the War Dept. telegraph office) about eight feet from where Mr. Bates sat, a paragraph or two a day, requiring in all about three weeks to complete the document."

To what degree this "paragraph or two a day" of Lincoln may have been influenced by Col. McKaye's secret report to the President made at that time, or by cipher conferences over the wire between them during those "three weeks," may perhaps be yet revealed by Col. McKaye's lost autobiography, if the manuscript of that shall ever be recovered. In June of '62, Col. McKaye had published a pamphlet,† which received wide circulation: *The Birth and Death of Nations, a Thought for the Crisis*. A published review of it (in *The American Baptist*, June 24, 1862) commented:

* Bates was author of *Lincoln in the Telegraph Office*. His obituary appeared in the N. Y. Times, June 16, 1926.

† The full title-page reads: "The Birth and Death of Nations, A Thought for the Crisis by James McKaye. Reprinted from the Rebellion Record, New York: G. P. Putnam, 532 Broadway, 1862."

"Among all the pamphlets, addresses, sermons and articles which this war has called forth, we have not met with one that surpasses this essay of Mr. McKaye. It is a clear, calm, philosophical examination of the conditions of our national life, and the duty of our civil rulers to preserve it. . . . If we refuse to put the war squarely on the ground of freedom, as the rebels have placed it on the ground of slavery; if we have no grand *idea* for which to battle, we need not hope to conquer. . . . 'What a solecism in human affairs,' says Mr. McKaye, 'does this war present, when viewed from its own logic! In the history of the world, was it ever before proposed to conquer a peace by carefully maintaining the cause of the war?' . . . This pamphlet should be scattered by thousands."

After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, this "solecism" no longer pertained, and during the following year Col. McKaye found himself again engaged in an arduous investigation in the South, as one of another commission of three, this time appointed by Stanton, the Secretary of War.

HOWE, OWEN, CARPENTER: COL. MCKAYE AND "MASSA LINKUM"

In *The Letters and Journals of Samuel Gridley Howe* (husband of Julia Ward Howe and famous Doctor of Boston, who taught the blind and deaf Laura Bridgman to speak), Dr. Howe's daughter, Laura E. Richards, writes:

"In 1863, Secretary Stanton appointed a Freedman's Inquiry Commission,* consisting of my father, Robert Dale Owen and James McKaye, to consider what should be done for the slaves already freed. . . . In behalf of the Commission, my father made an investigation into the condition of the coloured population of Canada West (now the Province of Ontario), and returning, presented an extensive report." This report † by Dr. Howe begins:

"Messrs. Robert Dale Owen and James McKaye, of the Freedman's Inquiry Commission: Gentlemen:—The undersigned respectfully asks leave to make through you, to the Secretary of War, the following Report of his observations of the condition of the coloured people of Canada, West . . . too important to be overlooked by a Commission of Inquiry into the condition and capacity of the coloured population of the United States, just set free. . . ."

Thus, of the three commissioners, Samuel Gridley Howe was delegated to go north to investigate Western Canada, Robert Dale

* This commission and James McKaye are referred to in "*William Lloyd Garrison, The Story of His Life told by His Children*," The Century Co., New York, 1889, page 71.

† A pamphlet entitled: "The Refugees from Slavery in Canada, West, Report to the Freedman's Inquiry Commission by S. G. Howe, Boston, Wright & Potter, Printers, 4 Spring Lane, 1864."

Owen appears to have made no investigation or report,* and James McKaye went south—alone, at the risk of his life, on a journey which led through the swamps of the Carolinas and Georgia to Alabama and Louisiana. On this quest, he interviewed amongst others his friend of Newport, Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson,† at Hilton Head, on the South Carolina coast, where Col. Higginson was commanding his regiment of freed black troops, “First South Carolina Volunteers,” the first to be raised in the war.

On his return to Washington from Hilton Head, Colonel McKaye reported personally to the President at the White House. There he conferred with Lincoln in an interview, a touching incident of which is related in the book, *Six Months at the White House*, ‡ by Frank Bicknell Carpenter, the artist, who (from February 5, to August 1, 1864), made special portrait studies of Lincoln there for his painting of the Emancipation Proclamation. Frank Carpenter was an intimate friend of my grandfather and father, and the following incident, which he relates in his book, was told him personally by my grandfather:

“Col. McKaye had been telling Lincoln about the ideas of power entertained by these negro freedmen. He said they had an idea of God, as the Almighty. . . . On the approach of our northern soldiers, their masters had fled, and this gave the slaves a conception of a power greater than their masters. This power they called ‘Massa Linkum.’

“Col. McKaye said their place of worship was a large building which they called ‘the praise house,’ where the leader of the meeting, a venerable black man, was known as ‘the praise man.’ Once, at a large gathering there, great confusion was created by different negroes attempting to tell who and what “Massa Linkum” was. In the midst of this excitement, the white-haired leader commanded silence. ‘Brederin,’ said he, ‘you don’t know nussin’ what you’s talkin’ ’bout. Now, you just listen to me. Massa Linkum, he eberywhar. He know eberyting.’ Then, solemnly looking up, he added: ‘*He walk de earf like de Lord!*’

“Col. McKaye told me that Mr. Lincoln was much affected by this account. He did not smile, as another man might have done, but got

* Unless his report is covered by a “Letter from R. D. Owen to the Secretary of State, Hon. S. P. Chase,” William Cullen Bryant & Co., printers, 1863 (Pamphlet No. 25).

† For intimations concerning the literary friendships subsisting between Col. Higginson and Col. McKaye’s household (which this biographer has often heard about from Col. Higginson himself), see his letter to Saidie McKaye, etc., in Appendix.

‡ *Six Months at the White House, with Abraham Lincoln, the Story of a Picture*, by F. B. Carpenter. Hurd & Houghton, New York, 459 Broome St., 1866.

up from his chair, and walked in silence two or three times across the floor. As he resumed his seat, he said very impressively: 'It is a momentous thing to be the instrument, under Providence, of the liberation of a race.'"

LINCOLN ANECDOTES: DAWN ON PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

This quotation from Frank Carpenter's *Six Months at the White House* recalls here some other recollections of the great President which Carpenter used verbally to relate in regard to his stay at the White House but did not include in his book, as he deemed them too intimate or informal to publish in print. As time, however, has rendered precious all valid recollections of Lincoln, however informal, which throw further light upon his endeared personality, I will record here the following which I remember his telling to my mother and have often heard her retell in our family circle. In the ups and downs of artists' lives, he and his wife (whom, as a boy, I used to call "Uncle Frank" and "Aunt Augusta") on several occasions shared as fellow members in our MacKaye household, where their son Herbert * was a boyhood chum of my older brothers. At the old Y. M. C. A. building (23rd St. and Fourth Avenue, New York), I have often watched in his studio "Uncle Frank" Carpenter painting at his easel, and an autographed engraving of his Lincoln portrait used to hang in my college room. From the artist personally I gained my earliest historic sense of the Emancipation Proclamation and of homely character traits in the good Emancipator.

In particular it struck my boyish imagination whimsically when "Uncle Frank" related how, very early one morning, about dawn, in the spring of 'Sixty-four, he had risen after a rather sleepless night perplexed with problems of his painting, and had gone outdoors to take a "constitutional" before breakfast. At that misty hour, as he walked down the broad path from the White House, he appeared to be the only person stirring in a deserted world, till on turning through the gate he heard, near by, a peculiar whistling and beheld in the gray light a prodigious black shadow, standing in the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue, beckoning with one long-extended arm. It was Lincoln, bare-headed, without collar, his feet in carpet-slippers—waving and whistling for a newsboy. Presently a small form came scurrying with a bundle of morning papers; the tall figure snatched one, handed a coin, and—peering

* Herbert S. Carpenter, in later years, was an outstanding champion of prison reform, in which he was the loyal friend, and co-worker of Thomas Mott Osborne and Adolf Lewisohn. Widely beloved, he died in Ardsley, N. Y., Oct. 26, 1926.

intently on the opened page—the President of the United States strode obliviously past, his gaunt outlines disappearing through the White House porch.

“MA! LET ME HAVE THEM—PLEASE!”

President Lincoln laconically characterised himself and his wife as “the long and short of it.” During his stay at the White House, Frank Carpenter occupied for a while a room adjoining the bedroom of President and Mrs. Lincoln. There, one afternoon, having lain down for a nap, he was awakened by the sound of Mrs. Lincoln’s voice pitched high as in altercation.

“No, Mr. Lincoln, you *shan’t* have them!”—came her words through the partition wall: then, with a wheedling earnestness, muffled, the lower, drawling tones of the President:

“Now, Ma, you know I *must* have them!”

“Not at all, Mr. Lincoln! You *can’t* have them: not until you promise me. . . .” The rest grew indistinguishable.

“But wife, you know right well that I need to. . . .”

“Need to be taught a lesson—yes, Sir! Promise me what I asked you, or I won’t leave go of them.”

Then tired tones of a patient weariness:

“Ma,—come now! be reasonable. Look at the clock. I’m late already. Let me have them—*please!*”

“Never, Mr. Lincoln!—not till you promise me first. . . .”

Then a last deep-voiced appeal of cosmic resignation:

“Laws, Ma! How do you reckon I can go to a Cabinet meeting—without my pants!”

CARPENTER’S “EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION,” AT AN EARLY STAGE:

A “LOST” PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN, NEWLY REVEALED

These anecdotes of Carpenter (never, I think, told in print before) and others related by him in his book, written the year after Lincoln’s death, were culled by him at first hand in the White House, while painting there his large canvas which hangs now in the National Capitol.* That painting of the Emancipation Proclamation, reproduced as an engraving, also hangs still in thousands of American homes.

“The first sketch of the composition,” wrote Carpenter in his book, “as it was afterward placed upon canvas, was matured . . . upon the back of a visiting card. . . . *The final arrangement of the figures was the result of much thought and many combinations. . . . It is not my purpose to follow in detail the progress, thenceforward, of the work.*”

* See on page i, 235, concerning its presentation to Congress by Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson. Cf., in Appendix, photos of Mrs. Thompson, F. B. Carpenter, and Carpenter’s handwriting.



THE SIGNING OF THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION
(An early stage of the painting by Frank B. Carpenter, 1864.)



"A FIRST READING OF THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION"
(Stanton, Chase, Lincoln, Welles, Smith, Seward, Blair, Bates.)

The picture at top of page is here reproduced (for the first time), from a photograph (taken in process of work, during the spring of 1864) of an early incomplete stage of Frank B. Carpenter's famous painting, later altered and completed by him at the White House, in July, 1864; the photograph having been newly discovered by Percy MacKaye, in 1927. (Cf. Plate 98, Vol. Two.)

Below it is reproduced the long-familiar painting, as it hangs in the Capitol at Washington. In comparing these two "versions", note how deftly political winds have blown the pen from Lincoln's hand to Seward's (bleaching his foreground trousers) and swept the sword from an empty chair (pages 106-108; cf. also Ida M. Tarbell's statement, Appendix, ref. p. i, 108).



DR. SAMUEL GRIDLEY HOWE



COL. THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON



THE NEW "LOST" LINCOLN PORTRAIT FROM LIFE
Painted by Frank B. Carpenter, 1864, and newly discovered
by Percy McKaye, 1927 (pages 106-108).



COL. JAMES MCKAYE
(pp. 100-111)



ROBERT DALE OWEN

PRESIDENT LINCOLN, AND A GROUP OF HIS "FREEDMEN" LEADERS, IN THE CIVIL WAR

This progress in detail "toward the final arrangement of the figures" was never publicly described or recorded by Carpenter, though it was attended for several months by the personal interest and the occasional criticism of Lincoln himself * and of Lincoln's Cabinet. Through old friendship with the Carpenter family, however, I have had the good fortune to discover, in January, 1927, and now to reveal a neglected record (never, I believe, till now published) of this very "progress in detail . . . the result of much thought and many combinations," on the part of Carpenter himself, in a surviving photograph which presents as its central figure a long-lost and now apparently new portrait of Lincoln (here reproduced, in this chapter), which existed only briefly on canvas, before the artist painted it out and altered its composition.

The photograph (which Carpenter probably had taken for his own personal reference to assist him in working out his "many combinations") has pasted on its back, in Carpenter's handwriting, a list of the eight statesmen depicted in the painting. It evidently presents an early stage in the progress of "the first sketch of the composition as it was placed upon canvas": a stage wherein the artist was still struggling with the problem of Lincoln's legs, here vaguely contoured in triplicate. Lincoln's head, however, has a vivid strength and freshness of impression lacking in the later completed long-worked-upon portrait. His right hand holding the quill, his left holding the Proclamation, and a score of other details differ from the final form of the painting (here also reproduced), as a comparison of the two makes evident.

SEWARD'S "LAST INFIRMITY"; CHARLES DICKENS "EXCEEDINGLY
INTERESTED"

The original form clearly appears as a picture which might have borne the title of "*The Signing of the Emancipation Proclamation*," whereas the final form, as exhibited to the world, is officially named "*A First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation*." In this alteration of the original composition, with its visual emphasis shifted in part from the President to his "pointed-up" Secretary of State (whose foreground trousers have been heightened from dark to light), there is subtly manifest the "last infirmity" of political minds, to share—even though by diluting—the personal fame of an

* After its completion on July 22, 1864 (states Carpenter in his book), Lincoln "repeated very emphatically the expression he used when the design was first sketched upon the canvas: 'It is as good as it can be made.' And Lincoln added, 'There is little to find fault with. The portraiture is the main thing, and that seems to me absolutely perfect.'"

immortal event. Just what seven cabinet ministers, under their whip-hand of State, did with Lincoln's Proclamation pen and manuscript, during their six months' sittings to an unpolitical artist, is here now pictorially revealed—itself a mute annotation of White House history, accentuated by the prehensile pose of Seward's finger and thumb, on the imminent verge of usurping both quill and inkbottle!

Carpenter's book, appealing in its fine candor and modest sincerity, went through many editions (taken over by Houghton Mifflin, re-named, "The Inner Life of Abraham Lincoln") and won in its day a deserved and immense vogue, as the following greeting to its author from Charles Dickens suggests. Three years after Lincoln's death, while on a strenuous last lecture tour in the United States, Dickens wrote to Carpenter, from "Westminster Notch, New York, Sunday Fifteenth February, 1868":

"Dear Sir—I beg to thank you cordially for your 'Inner Life of Abraham Lincoln.' It has interested me exceedingly. I sat down quietly to read some pages of it, an hour after I arrived here: and the book did not leave my hand until I had read it through to the last word. Believe me, Dear Sir, Faithfully yours—*Charles Dickens*.

F. B. Carpenter, Esqre."

From these records of Frank B. Carpenter, who was closely associated in friendship and in labours for Emancipation with my grandfather, I turn now again to the personal activities of Col. McKaye, whom Ida M. Tarbell has termed "a notable friend of freedom." *

ADVENTURES IN THE FAR SOUTH: "EMANCIPATED SLAVES AND OLD MASTERS"

The results of Col. McKaye's investigations in the South were written by him in a copious pamphlet published in 1864: "*The Mastership and its Fruits*": THE EMANCIPATED SLAVE FACE TO FACE WITH HIS OLD MASTER." † This was published by a group of northern leaders, whom he had helped to organise for the expression of union ideals—the Loyal Publication Society, ‡ at 863

* Cf., in Appendix, Ida M. Tarbell's comments on these records concerning Col. McKaye and Carpenter, in relation to Lincoln.

† "A Supplemental Report to Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, by James McKaye, Special Commissioner. New York. The Loyal Publication Society, 863 Broadway, No. 58. 1864."

‡ Concerning this society, Col. McKaye wrote in the *Paris American Register* (June 9, 1883), in an article on *M. Laboulaye and Our Civil War*: "In our American conflict an invincible moral force was as indispensable as the force of arms, and such a force was only to be found in the creation of a public opinion so indomitable that the Government could not do otherwise than

Broadway—of which, with Levi P. Morton (afterwards U. S. Vice-President), Morris Ketchum and others, James McKaye was an officer of the Finance Committee, and William Cullen Bryant, the poet, was official “printer.”

The Mastership and its Fruits is filled with absorbingly interesting material, humanly pathetic and picturesque, including depositions of sworn witnesses personally interviewed by the writer, and gives a very vivid picture of the time and locality. In Commissioner McKaye’s report one of the witnesses deposes:

“Generally, on every plantation, there was at least one negro who in secret had learned to read a little, notwithstanding the danger of severe punishment. On the day after the news of the execution of John Brown reached New Orleans, I started for a plantation seventy-five miles up the river. Soon after my arrival there, a slave gave me a detailed account of the execution. That morning a slave in the sugar-house had asked of his master a piece of paper to wipe some portion of the machinery. His master handed him a newspaper, most of which the slave retained and, afterwards, secretly read it to the whole force. It contained an account of John Brown’s execution.”

MCKAYE’S “MEASURES” FOR 15TH AMENDMENT: HIS MESSAGE
ON LINCOLN’S DEATH

The pamphlet concludes with a series of definite, statesmanly recommendations for a national policy of justice which, had they been adopted and carried out by the Government, might have prevented the tragic after-consequences of the “Carpet Bag” era in the South. One exceedingly important recommendation of this “commission” in “their” report (written by Col. McKaye alone) was, however, deeply considered by Congress and afterwards adopted, in the most momentous change ever effected in the Constitution. This recommendation is thus stated, by Colonel McKaye, in his own words of the report:

“This brings me to speak of the means which, in the judgment of the Commission, are deemed necessary to give practical effect to the acts of Congress and the President’s Proclamation of January, 1863, ‘to the end that the coloured population thereby emancipated may defend and support themselves.’ Their recommendations embrace three * obey it. To this end there was organised in New York the Loyal Publication Society and, growing out of that, the Loyal National League and the Union League Club. . . . On the council and executive committee of the Loyal National League were Charles King, William Cullen Bryant, Charles Butler, John Jay, Parke Godwin, John Austin Stevens, William Lieber, C. E. Detmold, William Curtis Noyes, Francis George Shaw, William T. Blodgett, Sidney Howard Gay, *James McKaye*, William E. Dodge.”

* The second and third recommendations of Col. McKaye comprised: (2) for the negro, national guarantees of civil and political rights, including the

principal measures which *with more or less completeness have been heretofore, in their several preliminary reports—and are herewith, in their final report—submitted to the War Department.*

“The object of the first of these measures is to secure, beyond any possible doubt, the civil right of the coloured man to personal freedom, by placing that right, in the new order of things, on the same broad basis as that of the white man. . . . This is to be effected most surely by an amendment of the Constitution of the United States. That measure is already before Congress, and although not exactly in the form recommended by the Commission, yet it is believed sufficient—especially if accompanied with legislation in the same spirit and with a like intent—to accomplish the great object proposed; and every true lover of his country’s permanent peace, prosperity and honour cannot but await with the greatest anxiety its final consummation. . . . J. McKaye, Special Commissioner.”

That “final consummation” was the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution; and this definite pioneering share in that historic result, on the part of Col. James McKaye, never till now put on record, is too vital a part of the heritage of his son, James Steele, to be omitted from this memoir.

On April 15, 1865, Abraham Lincoln died. Dated two days later, a little time-worn clipping from a New York newspaper (April 17) still gives inkling of that tempestuous time, glimpsed in a telegraphic despatch by “James McKaye, President.” The clipping reads:

“AN ATTACK AND WHAT CAME OF IT

“The President of the United States Telegraph Company in this city received this morning a despatch from Mr. H. A. Clute, Division Superintendent, stating that the windows of the company’s office in Auburn were smashed in last night, because it displayed a photograph of President Lincoln draped in mourning. The telegram also stated that the post office was served in the same manner for the same reason. A proper reward was offered for the arrest of the parties perpetrating the outrage.

“Mr. James McKaye, President of the Company, sent the following despatch in reply: ‘New York, April 17. To H. A. Clute, Division Superintendent, United States Telegraph: Direct that our office at Auburn be fully draped in mourning, and that a portrait of our martyred President, similarly draped, be displayed at every pane of glass. Defend the office and the portraits, with powder, lead and steel, until after the obsequies on Wednesday.—*James McKaye, President.*’ ”

elective franchise; and (3) “the initiation of a policy which shall have for its aim the ultimate division of the great plantations into moderate-sized farms, to be held and cultivated by the labor of their owners.”

This was probably one of the last acts of Col. McKaye as a telegraph executive, for at about that date the United States Telegraph Co. merged with a combination which became the Western Union Telegraph Co. Of this Col. McKaye was invited to become President but declined, as his war labours in the southern swamps had impaired his health, and he decided to retire from all active business and soon afterwards went abroad, to travel.* Thenceforward, till his death in 1888, he spent most of his time in Europe, making his residence in Paris. There, and on frequent visits to America, he continued to be an important and helpful influence "behind the scenes" in the artist career of his son.

*In the New York Public Library is still preserved a "Catalogue of the Private Library of Colonel James McKaye, comprising A Very Choice Collection of the First and Best Editions . . . Works in Elegant Bindings . . . Illustrated . . . Rare American Works, etc." Some 800 volumes sold at auction at Clinton Hall, June 7 and 8, 1869. At that time Col. McKaye finally relinquished his home at 72 (modern number, 118) E. 19th St. for permanent residence abroad.

CHAPTER IV

TRANSITION

1863-'69 *

PROBLEM OF LIVELIHOOD; "RATHER CAPTAIN THAN MATE"

THE WAR HAD DEEPLY SHAKEN THE LIVES OF ALL AMERICANS. The comparatively serene continuity of pre-war life was shattered, and the altered conditions offered little opportunity for a young painter like McKaye to combine economic independence with the serious pursuit of his art. Though his father was always generous, young McKaye did not wish to subsist by his generosity. Consequently, during the next few years, economic independence became for him a passionate problem. After his second army campaign he was occupied, for a short while, in helping promote the "Rogers' Groups," statuettes of Civil War scenes ("The Wounded Scout," etc.) by John Rogers, the American sculptor, a friend of his.

At this period, phrenology was being acclaimed as a new science by authorities of standing. In Boston, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe lectured upon it to his medical students. Written at "New York, Feb. 19, 1864," the following "Phrenological Character of Mr. James McKaye," describes so aptly some of my father's characteristics that these excerpts are worth quoting:

"James McKaye: you are built on the active go-ahead principle, and that which is most alive pleases you best. You should study to take life moderately, so as not to exhaust yourself prematurely. You are exceedingly ambitious to take a leading place in the world, not content to fill a subordinate place; *you would rather be captain than mate*. . . . You are emphatically your mother's son. You should be known for your aspiring disposition, high sense of honour, great sensitiveness to blame and praise . . . love of the beautiful in art and the sublime in nature. You live in the upper story of your mind; the basement—your affections, appetites, senses—are in good health and activity, but you prefer to revel in the ethereal. If you should travel among strangers, you would adapt yourself to be one in spirit. . . . You are curious to look into new things, desire to know *all* that may be known, judge correctly of form, proportion, readily detect resemblances, are fond of order. You have great fondness for music, though you may not compose it. You love poetry, sculpture—would make a good speaker. As a reasoner, you seek the *causes* of things . . . are quick to resist, to debate, very fond of variety. Candid, open-

* These years were passed by J. S. M. in New York, Eagleswood, N. J.; Mt. Desert, Portsmouth, N. H.; White Mountains, London, Paris, New York, Catskill Mountains, South Egremont, Mass.

hearted, you will be more liberal than you can afford to be. Your love for home, friends, children, the social circle, is very strong. As a merchant, *you would make money more easily than keep it.*"

H. M. ALDEN AND JAMES K. MEDBERY: LITERARY "STRUGGLES
AND SUCCESS"

At the time of this statement, McKaye had recently become acquainted with a brilliant young New Englander, James K. Medbery, who had come up from Brown University to commence an arduous literary career in New York. There he became the intimate chum of young Henry M. Alden, who had just started his own career of nearly sixty years at Harper's. In a published reminiscence of him, Alden wrote: *

"I first met James K. Medbery at Mrs. Annie Lynch Botta's House, in New York, early in 1863. He was then assisting her in a book she was publishing—a *History of Universal Literature*, while teaching in the fashionable Morris's school. Neither of us physically robust, we were both eagerly struggling for a foothold. His vivid personality and the almost ironic but unfailing buoyant bravery with which he encountered all difficulties deeply impressed me.

"Soon after that, he entered the lists for the precarious prizes of journalism, and made his way manfully to a marked success. I was then managing editor of *Harper's Weekly*. We were loyal friends and I felt for him a personal affection. We had many friends in common. I was then living in Harlem, where he and his sister, Mary, came often to visit. He first introduced me to James Steele MacKaye. At the time, Medbery's sensitive temperament and iridescent humour often suggested such a nature as Tom Hood's; but it was more modern than that. Now it seems more like Robert Louis Stevenson's. Both lived in the shadow of death."

As a New York journalist, Medbery was connected, at different times, with the *Evening Mail*, the *Evening Post* (under Bryant), the *North American Review*, the *Round Table*, the *Alden Press* and the *Northern Monthly*. Of the last three he was one of the founders. He also edited the *Trenton Monitor*. From 1869 to 1871, he was the literary editor of the *Christian Union* (now the *Outlook*), when Henry Ward Beecher was its editor.

"While literary editor there," wrote my mother in a sketch of his life, "Medbery wrote a series of book reviews, then widely commented upon, in which his unerring literary instinct proclaimed several authors then almost unknown in America, but now world famous. Thus he was one of the first critics in this country to recognise the genius of Robert Browning and of George Eliot.

* In the *Brown Alumni Monthly*, November, 1913; Vol. XIV, No. 4.

"In 1869 he wrote for the *North American Review* an article on the Erie Railroad embroglio, entitled 'New Jersey Monopolies.' This was the first important magazine article to deal with public exposures of American business methods. It made a profound impression and led to his writing, the next year, his *Men and Mysteries of Wall Street* (Fields, Osgood and Co., Boston, 1870). This book, for the first time, gave an exhaustive study of the Stock Exchange, and created a widespread sensation.

"In other literary paths he was a pioneer. In 1866 he established the Literary Bureau at New York. This comprised the first lecture bureau, in this country, which combined the promotion of literary lecturers with the examining and editing of various publications—articles for magazines, etc. Through his bureau, Medbery managed as lecturers—Mark Twain, Justin McCarthy, Kate Field, Du Chaillou, the French African explorer, and others."

MARK TWAIN, ANNE LYNCH BOTTA, POE & "THE RAVEN," EMERSON,
MRS. HENRY VILLARD

Apropos of this reference to Mark Twain is the following note, written from "Boston, Nov. 20" (no year date given):

"Friend Medbery—You *must* excuse this delay, but I couldn't get time to answer sooner. No, I can't write the Christmas book at any price, because I shall be travelling every day and lecturing every night till that time and beyond. Much obliged to you, though. Shall be in New York, Nov. 30, and talk in Brooklyn Dec. 1 and Dec. 4. Can't you call on a fellow? Faithfully yours, *Mark Twain*.*"

Mrs. Vincenzo Botta, 1815-1891 (née Anne Charlotte Lynch, of Bennington, Vermont, later of Newport, R. I.), through whom Medbery met Alden, was a patroness of the arts and herself a writer of reputation.† For more than forty years she was a significant figure of the epoch this memoir is concerned with—a hostess and friend well beloved by many leaders in arts and letters. At one of her "evenings" in Waverly Place (while she was

* Shortly before he died Mark Twain (when we were speaking together in behalf of the Children's Educational Theatre, New York: cf. p. i, 458) reminisced to me about these early days of his friendship for Medbery, under his lecture management. About 1865, Rev. O. B. Frothingham, who founded the literary "Independent Society," wrote to Medbery: "I hope earnestly to be able to associate your fine talents with *The Nation*, which is not started yet."

† Her *Hand-book of Universal Literature*, revised in part by James K. Medbery (Ticknor & Fields, 1865), was reprinted through many editions "as a classic," reissued by Houghton Mifflin in 1889. Her first book, *Poems, by Anne C. Lynch* (1849) included On the death of Mrs. N. P. Willis, Lines to Frederika Bremer, A Farewell to Ole Bull, Bryant, etc. "Her *Hand-book*," writes Hon. Chas. A. Peabody, New York, "is of a character quite unlike what is expected of her sex and abounds in matter characteristic rather of the sterner and stronger side of the human family."

still "Miss Lynch"), Edgar Allan Poe gave his first recital of *The Raven*, some weeks before its publication. Describing Anne Lynch, Poe himself wrote:

"Rather above the usual height, somewhat slender, with brown hair and soft eyes . . . she is chivalric, self-sacrificing, equal to any fate, capable even of martyrdom in whatever should seem to her a holy cause."

Some years later, from "Concord, 29 Dec., 1865," Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote to her:

"Dear Mrs. Botta: You were such a good angel to me in New York, I have wished, every hour since I came home, to say to you that I know well how rare such goodness is, and I prize it at its height. . . . I fancy that few people in New York have so wise possession of it as yourself. I wish I could believe that in your miles of palaces were many houses and housekeepers as excellent as I knew at 25 West 37th Street."

"At one of her informal 'breakfasts,'" wrote Kate Sanborn, "I met Emerson, Bayard Taylor, Bryant and 'Grace Greenwood,' all in their best mood. . . . Those were golden hours. At Mrs. Botta's evening receptions, everybody was 'somebody,' and no one was unduly lionized or neglected."

A volume to her memory, edited by her husband, the distinguished Dante scholar, in 1894, contains the tributes of her friends Parke Godwin, Julia Ward Howe, James A. Froude, Moncure D. Conway, Justin McCarthy, Wm. R. Alger, Charles Dudley Warner, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Mary Mapes Dodge, Kate Field, F. Edwin Elwell, Richard Watson Gilder, Edith M. Thomas, John Bigelow.

As recently as 1926, Mrs. Henry Villard, daughter of William Lloyd Garrison, has recalled for me out of her own remembrance:

"Mrs. Botta was one whose tact and kindness of heart made everybody welcome. To be invited to her home was a much coveted privilege. It was a spacious house, betokening wealth, refinement and ample leisure. The most liberal people in New York went there—such as went to hear O. B. Frothingham preach. . . . I met there Mattie Griffith*, the charming Southern girl, who at nineteen emancipated her slaves. She wrote *The Autobiography of a Female Slave*, which William Lloyd Garrison preferred to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Sumner and Wendell Phillips danced attendance on her, thrilled by her bewitching personality. She was, however, colour-blind, and dressed,

* Mattie Griffith (afterwards Mrs. Albert Brown) was an intimate friend of my father's family. When a boy, I remember her as an old lady in Boston, where she was known as "Mrs. Dog Brown"—owing to her many dog pets.

as she expressed it, 'nigger-fine,' with flounces edged with red and with bright red gloves. Once, in that gear, she jumped up on Mrs. Botta's new pale-blue sofa, and stood there to watch the Prince of Siam go by outside. . . . Mrs. Botta herself was a poetess, sculptress and singer—not handsome, but good homely, with a very intellectual face. The charm of her salon would be difficult to duplicate to-day." *

In the fall of '63, my uncle, James Medbery, while assisting Mrs. Botta to complete her *magnum opus* on *Universal Literature*, at her invitation introduced his young sister, Mary, to this interesting circle, and it was through Mrs. Botta, soon after, that my father met my mother.

PORTSMOUTH; MARY MEDBERY; REBECCA BELKNAP STETSON

Some years before at Portsmouth, N. H., we have already glimpsed Mary Medbery in her early teens. Now, a girl of eighteen, having graduated from the Portsmouth High School, she had come up to New York from the quiet home of her father, a New England minister, to join her brother in his high ventures of letters and journalism. Through him she was welcomed by Mrs. Botta to her home for a fortnight's visit, soon after her arrival in New York.

She has often told me of her first morning in the strange metropolis, how she hastened breathlessly from her room in the old Ashland House, to view for the first time the romantic vastness of that Broadway—of which she was afterwards to have nearly sixty years' experience in the theatre-careers of her husband and son. In anticipation her fancy had pictured an Olympian boulevard—and now this narrow dirty street of noisy cobble-stones!—Could *this* be the *Broad Way* of her fairied visions!

In her valedictory at high school she had recited some lines from the dramatist, Scribe ("not dreaming," she said, "of their prophetic import"), which she used sometimes pensively to recall—epitomising the life of the artist:

*"Peines, hasards,
Misère, souffrance
Dans les Beaux Arts—
Voilà comme on commence!*

* Of my grandfather, often at Mrs. Botta's salon, Mrs. Villard adds to the above: "Col. McKaye was a very commanding presence. My father knew him well."—This friendly relationship between William Lloyd Garrison and Col. James McKaye has been pleasantly handed on to their grandchildren, in many years of warm regard on the part of this biographer for his classmate, William Lloyd Garrison, Jr. (Harvard '97) and for Mrs. Villard's son, Oswald Garrison Villard, Editor of *The Nation*.

*Mais l'orage cesse,
Le ciel s'éclairci:
Honneurs, richesse,—
Voilà comme on finit!"*

In a long life of "*hasards dans les beaux arts*" she and my father never lived to see the "richesse" of this prophecy fulfilled, yet always she kept, fresh and undimmed, for him and herself, and for all those about her, the glad, anticipatory glow of her girlish dreams.* Golden-haired, grey-eyed, pensively beautiful, her portrait as she was in those days looks out at me still from unquenchable depths of tenderness—the gaze of a young Madonna, quivering-ly serene.

Born in Newburyport, July 11, 1845, Mary Keith Medbery came of old New England stock. Her father, Rev. Nicholas Medbery—a graduate of Waterville College, Maine, with an honorary degree from Brown University—was a direct descendant of Roger Williams, through the Rhodes family of Rhode Island. Her mother (née Rebecca Belknap Stetson,† of Brookline, Mass.) was the author of several lives of missionaries, an accomplished scholar who was for seven years principal of the Charlestown Female Seminary (1830-'37), then the leading institution of higher education for women in America—thirty years before the founding of Vassar College. From her, Mary Medbery inherited a deep religious nature, heightened by quick wit and a buoyant sense of humour.

Mary's sure literary gifts, critical and creative, had been early nurtured by her devoted mother and brother, and these gifts were a constant source of comradely help and instigation to my father throughout his career. The circumstance which first led to the after-union of their lives arose, strangely enough, from an ardent friendship for Mary Medbery on the part of Jennie Spring McKaye, who on their first meeting, through Mrs. Botta, conceived an instant and lasting fondness for her young Portsmouth friend, whom she invited to make a visit at Eagleswood, where James Steele McKaye was recuperating from the illness of his second war campaign. There, in the spirit of half-mystic idealism which characterised that transcendental community, their mutual friendships led to many after visits, in New York and New England, and ultimately eventuated in the quixotic but warm-hearted realignment of

* Cf. her portrait, in this chapter.

† Cf. Appendix.

their lives, already referred to: a circumstance of separation which, during later years of resulting remarriage, was unusually fraught with kindly understandings and permanent friendship.

MT. DESERT: SKETCHING WITH INNESS AND WM. JAMES; WHITE MTS.

In New York and New England, young James McKaye and James Medbery became boon companions and made together some vacation excursions. In the summer of '64, from Portsmouth, the two "Jims" made a trip to Mt. Desert (where Jim McKaye the year before had sketched with Inness and "Willie" James) and sojourned there among the rugged island fishermen. In the summer of the following year my father and mother, having been married on June sixth, made a trip into the White Mountains, where, in August they were joined, from Portsmouth, by her brother, James, with whom my father made a few days' sketching tour, while my mother rested en route. Writing to her from Jefferson, N. H., on August 22nd, he related his adventures with "Jim" Medbery, amid that "sublime in nature" which he loved:

"Monday morning I started with Jim for Conway via White Mountain Notch. In the midst of a glorious storm I changed my horse and started for the Crawford House, a ride of three miles. The sun had set; it was raining fearfully; the mountains were black, and blacker clouds were driving down the mountains. We could hardly see the road, narrow and steep, running down into a deep ravine between Mt. Webster and Mt. Willey. The wind blew a hurricane. Indescribable—the grandeur of the scene and the awful sensations of the moment! We arrived at the Crawford House, drenched, but very glad to get out of the bleak wilderness into warmth and comfort—supper in a charming room cheerfully lighted with gas. *Then* we enjoyed our ride immensely. . . . Early this morning I began a sketch of the Notch. . . . To-morrow at dawn I go up Star King Mountain."

On the same trip he writes: "Here I am at North Conway, the American Greece—the old pastoral Greece with its mountain farms: Greece as it was when its people were shepherds, before the temples were built, when men worshipped God in the mountains. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the time shall come when men shall neither worship in the temple, nor in the mountains, but shall worship him in spirit and in truth. We must begin where humanity in its infancy began to worship; namely, in nature.

"I have never seen such perfect beauty in my life. Every change in position makes a new picture, perfect in form and effect. Here is the place of all places on earth where the 'pure in heart' may see God. This is the worship in the mountains. Peace and quiet reign here. Each form and quality finds its counterpart. The clouds flit tenderly over the mountains, the voices of birds break upon the silence

like the sunlight upon the valley. Gently all these outward elements of nature greet me. Ah, when will *my day* appear? When will the sun of this universe *within* me rise upon the horizon of my life?"

NOTEBOOKS; EXPERT IN PAINTINGS; BOUTÉ BROS.; ABROAD AGAIN

As suggested by this letter, during that period the "inco-ordinated ideas" and desires of the young artist were seeking, but not yet finding, a focus of growth for their dynamic energies. The theatre was at length to supply this focus, but not yet for some years. Meantime, solutions for the problem of livelihood were sought in several experiments, evidenced in the contents of some notebooks at this time. One of these contains many data concerning wines, their fermentation, mixing, distillation, effect on health; proverbs about wines; sketch of a magazine article on wines, etc. These refer to a business plan, never actually undertaken, for the importation of good wines. Characteristically, the notes relate this business to the total fabric of human society, for my father never considered any undertaking without "seeing it large." Another notebook contains—with charts, landscapes in pen and pencil, etc.—this item "*On Agents for Artists*":

"The good which may come to artists is an extension of the market for their pictures. The evil which may come to them might be the sale of their pictures at a lower price than they were accustomed to get at home. If an agent can be found who will extend their picture-market . . . while power is not put into his hands to injure them, every opportunity must be given him to make a suitable compensation for his trouble."

The gist of this note was the basis of engagements which he then secured for himself, as an expert buyer of pictures for Bouté Bros., through Bowles, Drevet and Co., bankers of New York and Paris. That autumn, with commissions from these firms, he sailed for Europe. On his way, he had his first sight of London.

"I hardly realised," he wrote to his father, "that I was in a foreign country until I took a walk in Oxford St. and read the signs—'Essex Arms,' 'Berwick Arms,' 'Rat-catcher by Appointment to her Majesty,' 'Coachmaker to her Majesty,' etc. . . . Westminster Abbey filled me with indescribable awe: a feeling of the frailty of man, the strange power of his work and memory, the fleetness of time and the glory of work. In the presence of those monuments, I felt a deeper ambition than ever before to leave something behind me of dignity to the human spirit. . . . Considering my life, I think that my sense of its possible importance to God, to humanity and to myself will awaken a stern, lasting determination to self-discipline in the work I have

before me. . . . I express these thoughts to you, my precious father, because I never valued your sympathy and your inspiring words as I do now. I recall something Emerson says. *'We acquire the power we overcome!'* "

On this first sight-seeing glimpse of Westminster Abbey, my mother used to recall how—while their official guide was walking ahead, in conversation with my father—she slipped quickly under the rail-cord which divided them from the ancient throne of England, and gaily seated herself on the throne. There, for one regaling moment she imagined herself the successor of that long line of Stuart monarchs, whose Scottish sacred stone of power ("the Stone of Scone") was now incorporated beneath the English throne-seat—reconciled there by that same King James who placed the wolves' heads in the crest of Clan MacKay.

PARIS; STUDY WITH GÉRÔME; EARLY PLAYWRITING IN
FRENCH AND ENGLISH

To carry out his New York commissions for French pictures, young McKaye had dealings with the foremost painters in Paris, where he spent nearly a year in executing his work as an expert in paintings with brilliance and success. On the expiration of his contract with Bowles, Drevet and Co., the head of the firm (Chas. S. P. Bowles) wrote to him:

"During the time you acted for us in Paris in connection with our art matters you were active, expert, and evinced rare taste and skill, performing your undertaking faithfully."

At the same time he pursued his own work as a painter and studied for some months with the great Gérôme, at his studio, 6 Rue de Bruxelles. "I don't take any regular pupils," Gérôme told him, "but you may come and work in my studio while I paint"—an invitation which McKaye eagerly accepted.

An American fellow-artist at Gérôme's studio was Wyatt Eaton, the painter, a friend of Newport days. One day, my mother has told me, on the street my father saw an old long-bearded Spaniard, whose physiognomy interested him so much that he asked if he would pose for him. The old man consented, and the portrait head here reproduced * is a photograph of the drawing my father then made. This drawing he sent home to New York in a Christmas box with other drawings and gifts for Col. McKaye, who was still living in his 19th St. house, where the Colonel's wife (Maria Ellery

* As an illustration in this chapter.

McKaye) wrote back to her stepson this note of acknowledgment, giving some glimpses of home life and news of artist friends:

"Your father had first to attend to his post and have his siesta, before the box could be opened. Such was the fiat. When the auspicious moment arrived, you would have been amused by the grouping in the library: Leopold (the butler) on his knees with hammer and hatchet; Father investigating and approving enthusiastically at each evidence of your having worked so faithfully and to such good purpose. . . . Your old man is very fine. You were fortunate to find such a model. He would make his fortune in Rome.

"We have been to hear Henry James lecture on Carlyle. Harry James has written a story for the *Atlantic* called 'The Painter's Journal' * ! Wilkie is at home, and talks of going into a mercantile house. Willie is expected soon home from Brazil. I suppose you know that Mr. LaFarge had an attack of paralysis in the autumn and that it will be years before he can paint again.* He is in Newport and goes in sometimes to watch Dana, who is using Hunt's studio this winter. Cook is writing again about exhibitions and exasperating the artists while he amuses the public. . . . Many affectionate thanks for your kind and beautiful remembrances!"

Notebooks of McKaye at this period contain: a French play by him, *Le Cheveu Blanc*; a long "list of French painters," their paintings with prices secured for their sales; notes on Philosophers; on Photosculpture, with articles upon it by French and English press; scenario sketch for a dramatisation of Eber's *The Egyptian Princess*. This scenario in English and *Le Cheveu Blanc*, in French, record the earliest undertakings by my father as a dramatist which I have found. (Here in Paris, as ever, he was keenly interested in the theatre's art and frequented the Théâtre Français.)

ART DEALINGS: COROT, MILLET, ROSA BONHEUR; ROUSSEAU'S
EXCLUSIVE AGENT

The "list of French painters," comprises eighty-six artists, with their addresses in Paris, including amongst others Corot, Daubigny, Merle, Millet, Rousseau, Courbet, Comte, Frère, Claude, Breton, Cabanel, Ingres, Picot, Fromentin, Fichel, August and Rosa Bonheur, Tessot, Bonner, Coutourier. With all of these artists he conferred personally. From Rosa Bonheur he had friendly advice and a few lessons. At Corot's studio (51 rue Parradin Pirponière), he had frequent dealings and opportunities for study of that mas-

* This article by Henry James was published, six weeks later, in the *Atlantic Monthly* under title of "A Landscape Painter," February, 1866. John LaFarge, then thirty, continued his distinguished career for the rest of the century.

ter's work. Among these painters, the eminent Rousseau was especially struck by my father's abilities and made him his exclusive, personal agent in America, in a formal contract signed (June 20, '66) by himself and five other distinguished French painters. This contract, in ten articles, granting McKaye a commission of twenty per-cent for selling their pictures, commences:

"Mr. McKaye, voulant faciliter aux habitants de continent Américain l'étude des maîtres, se propose d'organiser à New York au commencement de novembre prochain une exposition de leurs tableaux. Les artistes soussignés constituent McKaye, pour une année à dater du premier décembre prochain, leur agent absolument exclusifs pour tout le continent Américain."

The contract is signed: "Th. Rousseau, Eug. Fromantin, F. C. Comte, L. François, Émile Lèvy, Gustave Moreau." With this unusual commission in his pocket, he left Paris and sailed, August 11, '66, for New York. The expert knowledge of French painting which he had thus acquired, remained with him always pleasurably. It is indicated, more than twenty years later, in this excerpt from the New York World (June 23, '89), headed: "*MacKaye as Art Connoisseur*":

"A black-haired, brilliant-eyed man sat recently in front of a little picture in a Broadway café, and said: 'That is the original of the famous *Maternity* by Merle, the Master of Bouguereau. In Paris it is valued not less than 60,000 francs. In conception, composition, tone, it is a masterpiece.'

"The picture seemed to stir his soul. Soon a little circle of respectful admirers were drinking in a profound lecture on art. The physiognomic, æsthetic, anatomic aspects of the picture were discussed and dissected. The man talked with the charm of genius and the complete mastery of his subject. Shortly—when, with quiet dignity, he went out—a stranger asked: 'Who is that?' 'Steele MacKaye,' was the response, '*the Sphinx of New York!*—a mystery. Every one knows him as an eminent playwright, but he is also artist, scholar, philosopher. In his early twenties he was one of the best known art connoisseurs in Paris. His life work is a book on æsthetic philosophy. He is a teacher, to whom college professors might, and indeed do, go to school.'"

1866: NEW YORK: PHOTOSCULPTURE: GRANT, FARRAGUT,
GREELEY; GEO. HAVEN PUTNAM

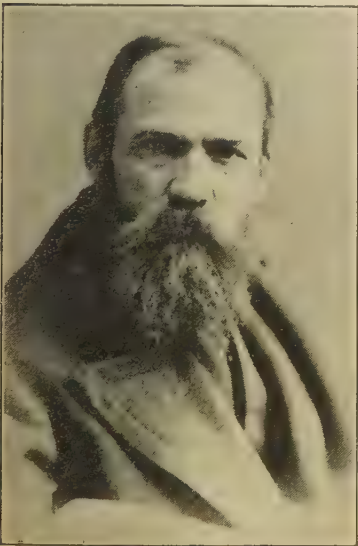
In 1866, as sole representative for America of these famous French painters, young McKaye had planned to found in New York a rival art establishment to the great house of Goupil. The oppor-



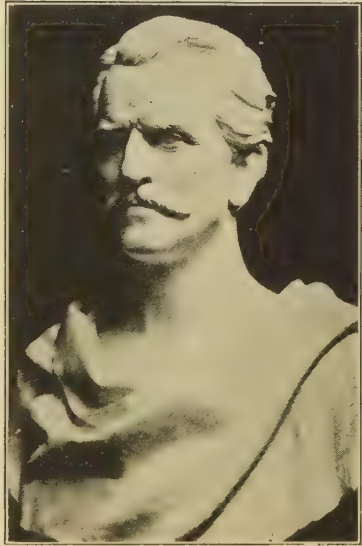
SHAKSPERE: By Ward; clay, before casting.



7TH REGIMENT: By Ward; bronze (page 99).



J. Q. A. WARD: Sculptor.

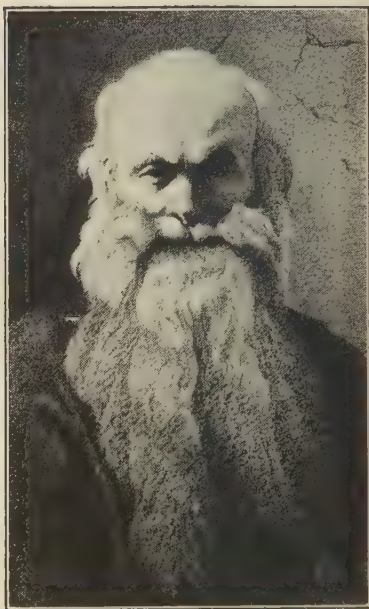


COL. JAMES MCKAYE: Bust by Ward.

In the studio of Ward, James Steele McKaye posed for Ward's Shakspeare and 7th Regiment Statues, now in Central Park (pages i, 79; ii, 204).



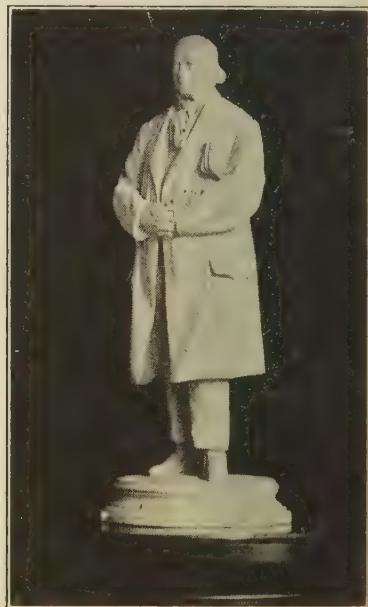
118 E. 19TH ST., NEW YORK
Residence of Col. James McKaye,
1859-1869 (p. 77). Photo, 1926.



OLD SPANIARD
Pencil Drawing by Jas. Steele McKaye,
Paris, 1865 (p. 120).



U. S. GRANT
Photosculpture Statuette by Jas. Steele
McKaye, 1867 (p. 124).



HORACE GREELEY
Photosculpture Statuette by Jas. Steele
McKaye, 1867 (p. 124).

tunity held brilliant and practical financial promise, but he was deflected from it by his enthusiasm for a new invention in which he had persuaded Col. McKaye to invest some \$15,000.

From France he had brought back with him the American patent rights in a new process called Photosculpture, invented by François Willème, of Paris. To this he devoted much time during the next two or three years. Since Photosculpture has, at the present time, been brought before the United States public as a recent American invention, it is pertinent to record that it was first introduced to America from France by my father in the autumn of 1866.

Directly upon his return then from Paris, he found in New York his first cousin, Henry Grant McKay, recently come from Rochester. Through him he then first met William E. Payson of Salem, Mass., who entered into his New York plans and became a devoted life-long friend, staunchly helpful to him through many emergencies. With Henry G. McKay, in Sept. '66, he associated himself as senior partner in "McKaye and Company." The launching and development of this photosculpture enterprise had its difficulties, touched upon by my father in a letter to Col. McKaye (April 28, '67):

"On reaching the workshop, I found Henry in despair . . . also that our new man, Videl, had been induced by Mr. Charodeau to run away to France, taking with him the money which we had paid him in advance. What was to be done? I began immediately . . . set up some clay on the machine, and cut a statuette. . . . I saw I must work desperately, to counteract the effect of our various delays and misfortunes. So I have stood at the machine from early morning till seven at night, and I have spent my evenings in meeting business men, to arrange for putting up the company."

The "Company" was soon successfully launched. A prospectus * of twenty-four pages is illustrated by photographs of photosculptural statuettes of *U. S. Grant*, *Danseuse*, *Disderi*, *Rose Deschamps*, *Bacchante*, *LaSource*. The statuette of General Grant (here reproduced, as an illustration) was "photosculptured" by my father at the Union League Club. To obtain this sitting, young McKaye

* *Prospectus of the American Photosculpture Co.* of New York City. Capital, \$100,000: President, William Rimmer; Trustees, William Rimmer, Christian von Hesse, Robert Dale Owen, Louis T. Warner, Silas C. Hay, James Steele McKaye, William E. Payson. Offices at 30 Nassau St. and 661 Broadway. "Dr. Wm. Rimmer (it states), Director of the School of Design, Cooper Institute, gave the only lectures on Art ever delivered before the Lowell Institute and the Boston Athanæum. . . . The purpose is to introduce in this country a new power in Art Industry, to make available fine works of art hitherto attainable only by the wealthy." For description of photosculpture process, see Appendix.

secured through his father, who was a friend of Grant, a personal interview with the General, at the latter's home, where he explained the invention amid a thick cloud of the General's tobacco smoke. Soon afterward my father entertained Grant at a dinner, on which occasion, my mother, who sat next to Grant, has often recounted to me the General's lively affability to her in conversation. To "Messrs. McKaye & Co.," soon afterwards, came this note:

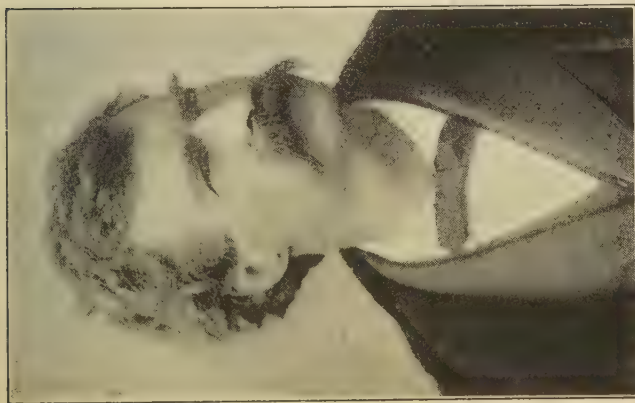
"Gentlemen: The sitting statuette of General Grant has been presented to the Club and been much admired as an excellent likeness, remarkably life-like and characteristic. I have not heard in the Club a single dissent from this opinion—G. P. Putnam, Chairman of the Art Committee of the Union League Club."

The Putnams, publishers, were intimate friends of Col. McKaye and his family. G. P. Putnam's son, Mr. George Haven Putnam, recalled to me, in 1926, how McKaye's statuette of Grant was likewise put on exhibition in the gallery of his father's publishing house.

"Mr. McKaye also arranged (writes Mr. Geo. Haven Putnam), to have the new art brought to the attention of other publishers throughout the country; and I remember that, in going to Chicago, I arranged with General McClurg, to exhibit the statuettes in his stores."

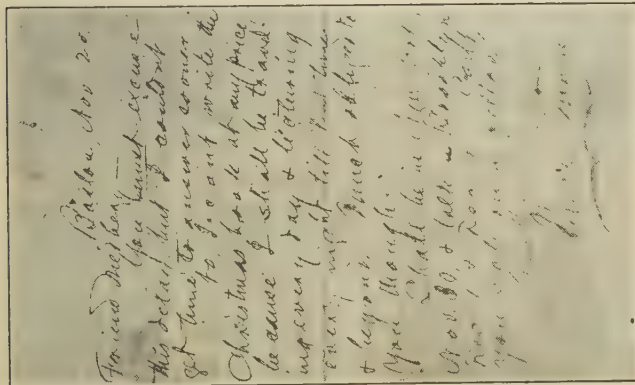
Portrait statues were thus made by McKaye of Admiral Farragut and Horace Greeley. Meantime, the invention itself had been much improved by some new devices of my father. A patent was granted, "August 13, 1867, to J. S. McKaye," for a statuette of "Hon. Horace Greeley: standing figure" (here reproduced, in this chapter). A severe blow, however, was given to the enterprise by a sudden robbery. Just before the Grant presidential campaign, the bronze statuette of Grant, from which all other casts in plaster were to have been made, was stolen by a workman, thus dashing the hopes of a large financial return. To the President of the company, Dr. William Rimmer, McKaye wrote (Aug. 29, '68):

"Unforeseen circumstances have forced me to abandon the mechanical department of *Photosculpture*. . . . From 8 A. M., often till late at night, I have my operators to educate, my photographers to oversee, my tracings from the lantern to make, and I must bear the sole responsibility for success. . . . Now, sir, my interest in the stock cannot pay me for this anxiety and strain. . . . I do not hope for an offer of higher salary. I would rather not, for any salary, take the position."



MARK TWAIN, About 1869

James K. Medbery (author, literary editor of *The Round Table*, etc.), whom his friend Henry M. Alden, of "Harper's," likened to R. L. Stevenson (cf. page 113), was the brother-in-law of Steele MacKaye. An early friend of Mark Twain, Medbery originated, 1866, in New York, *The Literary Bureau* (later succeeded by Redpath), through which Mark Twain lectured for a time under Medbery's management (index)



LETTER FROM MARK TWAIN TO MEDBERY



JAMES K. MEDBERY, About 1869
Oil portrait by Frank B. Carpenter.



JEAN LEON GEROME (1824—1904; p. 120.)

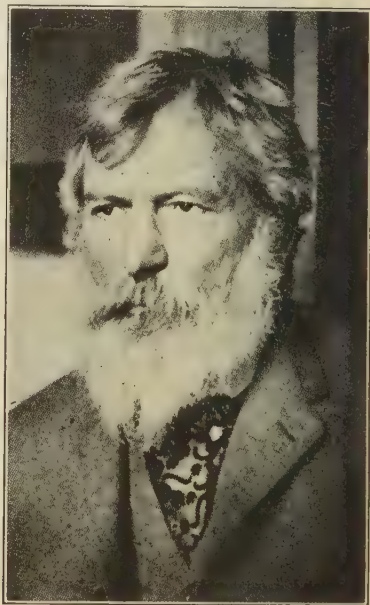


JOHN LA FARGE (pp. 76 and 480.)

A FRENCH AND AN AMERICAN MASTER IN PAINTING



RICHARD WATSON GILDER
Poet; editor "Century Magazine" (p. 256).



HENRY MILLS ALDEN
*Essayist; editor "Harper's Magazine"
(pp. i, 113—; ii, 241).*

TWO LEADING LITERARY EDITORS

It had become clear to him, in short, that photosculpture could provide him with no fitting expression of his creative gifts as an artist. So he retired from it, and—without McKaye's initiative behind it—the enterprise ceased soon afterwards.

MACHINERY, MYSTICISM, SYNTHESIS, "THE USE OF MAN"

The chief service of this experiment to his future development as a theatre artist was its contributing insight into subtler uses of a form of machinery. The beautiful precision of a delicate machine fascinated him. He delighted to take apart, study, and reassemble the fine works of watches. He loved the processes of intricate engines. Yet for him machinery was never merely commercial, or utilitarian. Approaching it as an artist, machinery breathed for him elemental life; contemplating it as a philosopher, it took on noble cosmic relationships; utilising it as an architect, it subserved the purposes of synthetic beauty. Before his death, he came to be widely acknowledged as the foremost theatrical inventor of his time. This was so, because he conceived of machinery as the majestic servant of art, never as its master. Though his enthusiasm for it was characteristically American and practical, his kind of use of it was essentially mystic.

This much I touch upon here, because at this early time (before he had ever heard of Delsarte) he wrote in a note-book a short essay, entitled "OF THE USE OF MAN,"* which intimates, even in contemplating machinery, those "principles of co-operation" or "harmonic" development, related to a religion of æsthetics, which later he creatively contributed to the cultural discipline known as "the Delsarte System."—This is an excerpt from his essay:

"Of the Use of Man: Man creeps through the world in search of his highest destiny—his fullest measure of happiness. What that destiny may be, and how attainable, are questions which every thoughtful man has sought to solve, in confronting the problems, which the silent Sphinx of life we call Death is continually imposing upon us.

"If we go to the Mechanical Exhibit, we shall find there various machines, the destiny of which we may discover by an examination of the work they perform. *The true destiny of the machine is its use*—and the means by which it attains its end are *the proper organization and co-operation of its parts*. It is so also with Man: the highest destiny of Man is his highest use—the exercise of his highest faculty;

* Cf., with this essay, one written, fifty years later, by his son, James MacKaye, entitled *The Utility of Man*, comprising the last chapter of his book, "The Happiness of Nations, A Beginning in Political Engineering." B. W. Huebsch, New York, 1915.

and the means by which he is to attain that destiny are *the proper organisation and co-operation of all his faculties and forces.*

"How, then, is man to develop the power to exercise that his highest use? To reply, we must examine the machine—note the number and relationship of its parts, and discover *the principles of co-operation* by which it is enabled to perform its function, with the least friction and the most perfect precision. . . . So in the production of man we must have a type ideally conceived and practically tested. . . .

"In viewing, then, the main developments of Time, we find one manifestation of manhood—so perfect in patience, so heroic in courage, so marvellous in subtlety, so innocent in act, so tender in love, so vast in power, that . . . love of his likeness, and aspiring endeavour to attain it, shall surely bring to us, in time and eternity, the achievement of our highest destiny—which means our grandest use."

VITE, "THE BAYARD OF DOGS"

During the latter part of this photosculpture period, my father and mother were living at 68 South Washington Square, then a serene, shady park, surrounded by a high iron paling, within which only residents upon the park were admitted by private keys to the gate. My father then owned a superb St. Hubert's hound, named Vite, whom he adored. Accompanying him on his walks in the park, the splendid animal would bound over the high paling in sheer joy of exercise: a habit of training which led to the dog's untimely end—and legended memory.

In the summer of '68, with William E. Payson, James Medbery and my mother, my father went on a sketching trip in the Catskills, and took Vite with him. There, on one long excursion, the three men had been walking "'cross lots," climbing fences and walls, which the great hound delighted to clear at a leap. In this way, homeward-bound to their hotel, they stopped above the Kaaterskill Falls at a platform in front of the Catskill House. Here on the edge of a precipice, two hundred and eighty feet deep, a high board fence shut the travellers from the splendid view below, to see which it was needful to climb a short flight of steps and peer over. This my father and my Uncle James were just starting to do, when Vite—judging that they were about to climb over another fence—barked joyously, leapt swiftly between them, bounding high in the air, and fell far below to his death.

My father was nearly heart-broken. The body was recovered from the abyss, and buried at the foot of the cliff. In the side of the cliff my father had a smooth oval ("as large as a small dining table") cut out of the solid rock. On the oval he had carved this inscription:

"To the Memory of
 V I T E
 The Bayard of Dogs
Sans Peur et Sans Reproche.
 Killed
 June 19, 1868, by Leaping from the
 Platform above the Falls to
 the Rocks Beneath,
 This Epitaph is Inscribed to His
 Memory by His Friends
 J. S. McK.—W. E. P.—J. K. M."

The inscription, still there, has grown legendary with the years, as this excerpt from the New York Times (Oct. 11, 1901) records:

"The tragic story of a dog's devotion to his master, even unto death, is graven deep in the face of a rock beside the Kaaterskill Falls. There it has interested many thousands of visitors to this beautiful and romantic region. . . . Vite's feat has been embellished by legend in its long recounting by the permanent denizens of these mountain solitudes. They tell how towards midnight, on every 19th of June, the ghost of the dog haunts the vicinity of the falls; and how, at the witching hour, a succession of short, sharp barks is heard, followed by the flight of the apparition through the air, over the falls into the precipice, whence arises a prolonged howl, which echoes and re-echoes among the Cimmerian recesses of Sunset Gorge and the forest-clad slopes of High Peak Mountain."

MATILDA HERON, "CAMILLE" BENEFIT; AGNES ETHEL

In the autumn of '68, my father and mother were hunting for a furnished house in New York when they came, on consulting their agent's list, to No. 146 East 35th St., a quiet, stately basement-entrance residence, still standing, nearly opposite an old church.

"To our great surprise," my mother has related to me, "when we were ushered in to meet the owner, we found no less a personage than the famous actress—Matilda Heron. She, you know, had been the great *Camille* of a generation earlier, but was now retired, as Mme. Stoppel. Your father had seen her act as a boy. 'Yes,' she told us, 'I will rent you my house, but I am going to act in my benefit performance in about three weeks and, until then, I'll stay on here with you, if I may. You see, the new generation has never seen my *Camille*, so my old manager has begged me to act it, just once more. I warned him that I'm too stout now, but he insisted, so I'm to do it.'

"Of course, we were delighted to have her 'stay on' with us, and we had very interesting times discussing with her the art of acting. She herself was then coaching young Agnes Ethel (the Ethel Barrymore of her time) to prepare for her *début*, and in that very house we

watched the final rehearsals of Miss Ethel, and attended her very successful première. Matilda Heron took a great fancy to your father, fell quite in love with him, as everybody did. They recited and acted some Shakespearean parts together. *'Why in the world aren't you on the stage!'* she exclaimed. *'With genius like that, you should go and study at the Paris Conservatoire.'* Her enthusiasm strengthened his thoughts of the theatre, which were then beginning to wean him from his beloved paint-brushes, for he had been ill and the confinement of the studio aggravated his troubles.

"Well, I shall never forget that benefit and Matilda's grand preparations for it. There was great excitement about a white muslin dress: should she wear it, or *shouldn't* she? I advised her surely to wear it, and finally she did. The Academy of Music was jammed with a vast audience, and she had an ovation. The old stagers adored her and the new ones caught their spirit. They encored a song that she sang, when the father of the lover begs *Camille* to renounce him and she resolves to do so:

*"When other lips and other hearts
Their tale of love shall tell—
Then you'll remember—you'll remember me!"*

"After midnight, when she got home terribly excited, and we were alone together—'Now, my dear!' she burst out, 'tell me truly: *Was I beautiful? Was I lovely?*'"

"Well, you know, she *was* stout—but she was a lovely person!"

"AUNT SADIE,"—"THE FIRM FOUNDATION"

Public records of men of genius are prone to assume that their lives are passed in the uninterrupted building of those works which make their names illustrious, often wholly ignoring the existence of anonymous friendships and devotions which are the very buttresses that shore up and sustain the splendid contours of their careers.

*"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!"*

rings the old hymn.

Among the millions of words concerning my father's career written during his lifetime, there was probably never mentioned the name of Sarah Stetson Pevear, whom the intimates of our family knew always as "Aunt Sadie." Yet without the "firm foundation" or her self-abnegating devotion to him and to my mother and to their children (continuing to their children's children), it is hardly probable that the superstructure of his works and days would have risen above a hundred storms and weathered them.

My mother's first cousin and adopted sister (fourteen years her

elder), "Aunt Sadie" first joined our line of the MacKaye Clan at the Matilda Heron house, New York, in 1868, and remained (till her death in 1905) the rock of stability in a household of exuberant artists and waxing children—a mothering foster-grandmother, adored by us all. Great-hearted, practical, humorously serene, with the common sense of old Yankee pioneer days, she was herself an uncanonised "saint of the Lord," in staunch fortitude a very George Washington,* wresting victory from more than one dire Valley Forge in campaigns of selfless dedication to our common cause.

The current of this memoir cannot pause to mirror the fruitful meanings of her great and good life, yet some hint of these may at least be gleaned from this excerpt of a letter which my father later wrote to her on her forty-second birthday (July 18, '73), while he was in the midst of a strenuous acting tour in England, recounted in a later chapter. I introduce it here, in advance, in order the better to introduce "Aunt Sadie" herself:

"Dear Sister 'Sid'—God bless you this day and all days of the year, as we bless Him for the day that gave you to the world. If gratitude could secure you perfect health and happiness, and the various debts of love due you were paid up, you would be the happiest woman in the world. For me and mine I acknowledge that our debt to you will take all time and a good portion of eternity to settle. . . . I have been rehearsing *Hamlet* all day long, and am very tired; but this is your birthday and I am determined it shall not pass without a word of greeting from me to you. I am looking forward to Sunday with sweetest dreams of my little home, full of dear ones. With love and kisses to them all, ever in true, deep love, your brother—James Steele MacKaye."

"CUT OFF WITH A SHILLING": PAINTING OMNIBUSES

Early in '69, a clash of Scotch temperament between Col. MacKaye and his son (not infrequently recurrent) precipitated a financial crisis wherein the "non-conforming" son went again desperately in quest of his economic independence. During this quest he moved with his family to room in a boarding-house on East 15th Street, near Irving Place, kept by a Mrs. Waters.† At this house little six-year-old Bijou Heron, Matilda's daughter, who was afterwards a prominent actress and married Henry Miller (becoming the mother of Gilbert Miller), stayed, at Mathilda's request, under

* Her features were strongly of the Washington type. Cf. her silhouette, reproduced in Volume Two, Chapter XXIII.

† Cf. page ii, 191.

my mother's care, endearing herself during several months, while Matilda was getting a divorce.

Here, defiant of fortune, my father took to his paint-brushes, vowing he would turn out some "practical" commercial pictures to support his independence. I can see again the reminiscent smile of my mother as she recalled them.

"'Dainty Daubs' he named them," she said. "He sold them for whatever he could get—a pittance each. So there we were, cut off with a shilling and living on hope! Men came and looked at the sketches while he was painting them. *Sometimes* they bought some! . . . One morning, he took a walk uptown. In those days there were great outcropping rocks, clambered over by goats, at 42nd Street and Fifth Ave., and only a few squatters' shanties between there and the foundations of the unbuilt Catholic Cathedral. Strolling off to Broadway, he happened to notice an omnibus with bouquets and landscapes painted on the outside panels. Instantly he rushed off to the office of the omnibus company and asked for a job, to paint similar decorations. I think he urged his experience at the École des Beaux Arts, and they actually let him paint several omnibuses. But when they asked him, 'What's a fine elegant feller like you want with this job?'—he came away disgusted and returned to his easel."

THE BERKSHIRE HILLS; *MAC AOIDH* AND "THE REAL MACKI"

The following spring and early summer were spent largely in easel-work at their old quarters (shared with Payson and Medbery) at 68 South Washington Square, and in landscape sketching at South Egremont, Massachusetts. In that noble region of the Berkshire Hills, they boarded with Mr. A. M. Smith, a singing teacher. On occasional business trips to New York, McKaye and his friend, Payson, came and went "over the mountain, via the station of Hill-side, Mass." During one of these trips, in early June, my mother wrote from South Egremont to my father, in the city:

"The view from our north window is of a high green hill with sheep and little lambs. You shall sketch them. . . . To-day I drove toward Great Barrington, and my pen stumbles, my ink refuses to flow, when I think of all the loveliness of which I fain would tell you. We crossed three of the calmest little rivers, the Green, the Hoosatic and another. Willows creep lovingly to their sides, elms dip their beautiful branches, maples and beeches throw long shadows over the rippling happy waters. I saw a dozen perfect pictures for you."

But the beauty of the Berkshire Hills was to hold him only a little longer to his painting.* His mastering counter-urge toward the theatre had at last secured, for a brief relenting, the sympathetic

* Cf. illustration, in this chapter, of his painting: "Sheep Grazing."



MARY MEDBERY MACKAYE
(Mrs. Steele MacKaye)
Aged about 24.



JAMES STEELE MACKAYE
Aged about 27.



REBECCA STETSON MEDBERY
Author and Educator (page 117).



MATILDA HERON (*page 127*).
Tragedienne. Pupil of Steele MacKaye



ANNE LYNCH BOTTA
Poet, Patroness of Art (pages 114-116).



SARAH LORING MCKAYE
Composer, Essayist, Hostess (i, 80; 254-256).

FOUR WOMEN LEADERS

interest of his father (who was now permanently residing in France), on the condition that he should come to study in Paris—"the one place in the world (urged the Colonel), where supremely the drama is considered as an art, rather than as a mere source of amusement, personal exhibition, or money making." This condition, of course, was joyfully accepted, and so, in late July, of '69, he sailed again for abroad.

On the voyage over, the ancestral spirit of *MacAoidh* sought him out in the person of a fellow passenger—a loyal Scotchman, homeward bound for his heather, who asked young McKaye how it happened that a clansman of "the r-r-real Mac-Kí" should so forget his forebears as to drop the "a" of the "Mac," and rhyme his name with "hay." In Scotland, he explained, there is an old proverbial phrase, "the real MacKay (Kí)," which means "the genuine article;" and a genuine "Mac-Kí-lander" is a "highlander" and no "haylander."—"Why dinna ye ca' yersel' MacKí, then, like a r-r-real Scot?"

The suggestion at once appealed to my father's enthusiasm and he adopted it. Thenceforward he pronounced his name to rhyme with the "high" in "highlander," and restored the full "Mac" as prefix. In these respects he established the spelling and pronunciation for his descendants. Thus when he landed once more in the Old World, he began the new career now opening before him as James Steele MacKaye (Kí).

CHAPTER V

ÆSTHETIC EXPRESSION

Delsarte and Discipleship

(France and America)

1869-'72

"En lui, James Steele MacKaye, j'avais placé mes plus grandes espérances: il était appelé à régénérer l'art dans le monde. Il n'était pas seulement mon meilleur élève—appelé aux plus brillants succès; il était encore mon seul disciple—plus qu'un disciple: un fils d'adoption, plus cher à mon cœur que mes propres enfants."—François Delsarte, in 1870.*

FRANÇOIS DELSARTE: "MASTER" OF RACHEL, MACREADY,
SONTAG, BETTINI, ETC.

MY FATHER WAS NOW ON THE THRESHOLD OF PERHAPS THE MOST decisive occurrence in his career. For nearly a decade he had been turning his mind to problems of æsthetic expression and philosophy, inventing for his own practice certain physical æsthetic exercises in conformity with his personal researches. He was now twenty-seven, publicly unknown, but inwardly reliant with faith in the youthful powers which at once tormented and exalted him toward the full fruition of their functions. Now he was about to meet a man of fifty-eight, in the late ripeness of his powers, whose genius and studies—in rare affinity with his own—had long since won for him the highest recognition as a master of æsthetic expression. The man was François Delsarte, and we shall see that the two men needed only to meet, to establish an instantaneous communion of ideas, wherein their closely related natures, researches and ideals became ignited and fused.

Public attention was first called to Delsarte in 1839, when he opened his first "cours d'esthétique appliqué," the fame of which spread through Europe. At various periods, from 1839 to 1859, artists and litterateurs, orators and actors, went from England, Germany and Spain to attend the repetition of these lessons in Paris. Among his pupils were Rachel, Macready, Sontag, Père Hyacinthe, Malebran, Carvacho, Bettini, Paul Delaroche, Brohan, Père Lacordaire, and the Abbé of Notre Dame.

TRIBUTES OF BIZET, BERLIOZ, GAUTIER, DUMAS, MUSSET,
TAINÉ, ROSSINI

George Bizet, the composer of *Carmen*, was his nephew. High

* Excerpt of a letter to Col. James McKaye from François Delsarte, Solesmes, France, 14 Oct., 1870.

encomiums of Delsarte and his work were written by Theophile Gautier, Jules Janin, Girardin, Dumas, Bossière, Vaudin, Brucker, Taine, and many others.

"While Rachel," wrote *Le Soir*, in an obituary critique (July 26, 1871), "wanted him at the Théâtre Français, the Théâtre Italien sought him to replace Bordogni. Thus both Tragedy and Opera fought for him, but nothing could tempt him to abandon his own liberty to study even more deeply the secrets of nature." — "François Delsarte," said the poet Lamartine, "is a sublime orator and an inspired teacher of eloquence." — Fiorentino, the keen, delicate and calm critic, wrote of him: "This master possesses a sentiment so true, a style so elevated, a passion so profound, that there is nothing in all art more beautiful or perfect." — Berlioz, the composer, described him as "one whose rendering of the great masters is so striking and forcible that their subtlest and sublimest works become accesible to the most obtuse intelligence."

"While still young," wrote *Le Salut Publique*, "Delsarte counselled Marie Milibrán, later helped to form Rachel, disciplined the style of the great magistrate Dupres, and taught the noble pathos of Pauline Garcia. Lacordaire, too, learned from this master in that historic room where Berryer, Lamartine, Arago, Musset, Dumas, Delacroix, Horace Vernet, Meyerbeer, Rossini, and so many other great ones, have left the memory of their presence. . . . In the bare simplicity of his own room, he evoked the heroes of Glück and Racine, Rameau and Corneille, with a charm and authority so irresistible that they awoke to actual life before our eyes and ears."

In 1869, François Delsarte—"Chevalier de l'Ordre des Guelphes, Chevalier de Legion d'Honneur," etc.—was still teaching in Paris, where he was already becoming the rather lonely giant of a great régime in art which was being superseded by the schools of a new generation.

MACKAYE'S FIRST MEETING WITH DELSARTE: "MON FILS! MON FILS!"

In the fall of that year, when my father arrived in Paris, he knew nothing of Delsarte. He came with the determined expectation of studying at the Conservatoire under its director, Régnier. How he suddenly altered this determination has been told by my mother, in a written address which she delivered before the S. S. Curry School of Expression, at Boston, in November, 1898. As this address has never been published, and since it describes this important period of my father's life and work with the authority of personal knowledge, I shall quote from it extensively here. My mother's statement follows:

"The name of Delsarte is so well known, the term Delsartian so widespread and so variously applied and *misapplied*, that it may be

of interest for me to relate something about the man himself as he appeared in his home, among his friends, in his classroom.

"How well I recall the first time I ever heard the name of Delsarte! It was one day at dinner very shortly after we had arrived in Paris. The previous year Delsarte had given singing lessons to Mr. MacKaye's sister and, in talking of his son's plans, Col. MacKaye casually remarked: 'Before deciding on the Conservatoire, I think it might be a good plan for you to call on Monsieur Delsarte. I have heard that Rachel and other eminent artists have been his pupils. His advice would be valuable.'

"But this did not in the least suit Mr. MacKaye. He had never heard of Delsarte. He had for years known of Regnier and the Conservatoire. So he merely remarked that it was better to leave well enough alone, and thus, as he imagined, dismissed the matter for ever. . . . One afternoon, a few days later, we were planning to go out and settle several matters, so that the Conservatoire studies could begin on the following morning. We were waiting for the carriage, when Col. MacKaye came into the room. 'Oh, my son,' said he, 'I met Monsieur Delsarte in the park yesterday, and I told him you would call on him soon. He is always at home about this time, and I wish—to please me—you would see him. Why not to-day?'

"Mr. MacKaye answered that he had too many appointments for that day, but would go later. As soon, however, as his father left the room, on a sudden impulse he turned to me and said: 'After all, why not see this Delsarte to-day and *have it over with!*' So he proposed that he should take the carriage, run over to 88 Boulevard des Courcelles, where Delsarte lived, and be back in plenty of time for our appointments. I assented: and he started off, saying he should be back in half an hour. At the door he met my sister (our children's 'Aunt Sadie'), coming home from a walk with the children*. He invited them to get into the carriage and drive over with him. Alas for our appointments, and for my poor sister! She often laughed afterward at her part in the introduction of 'the Delsarte System'!

"At the door of Delsarte's house, Mr. MacKaye left her in the carriage, saying: 'I'll be back in five minutes.' So she waited and waited (not daring to drive away, as she expected him every instant), amusing and pacifying the children as best she could—for more than *two hours!* As for me, seeing the clock go by one appointment and then another, I took off my hat and sat down, first in disgust, then in alarm lest some accident might have befallen. Just as I was anxiously about to set out in search of them, the party returned—the children crying, my sister half laughing, half vexed, but Mr. MacKaye walking on air, wrapt in a mantle of enthusiasm, reverence and delight, which from that day to his latest hour he never relinquished. Often afterwards he described to me details of that first visit.

"Mr. MacKaye had been shown into the parlour. The shutters were closed and it was almost dark. He was kept waiting for a few minutes, and had just opened a shutter for light to examine one of the many

* My brothers, Arthur, Harold and Will.

curios in the room, when he heard a voice behind him cry: '*Mon fils! Mon fils!*' Turning, he saw the tall figure of Delsarte, wrapt in a long dressing gown, standing in the door as if transfixed, still repeating the words, '*Mons fils! Mon fils!*' So the tall form came forward, pointing to a bust in one corner of the room, and in another moment he had thrown his arms about Mr. MacKaye and was almost sobbing on his shoulder.

"To one who has seen the bust of Xavier Delsarte this emotion will not seem unaccountable, for its resemblance to Mr. MacKaye was indeed very striking. Xavier was the son in whom Delsarte had placed his fondest hopes; he was to succeed his father in the work he had begun; but his sudden death, very shortly before this meeting, had almost broken his father's heart. So—as Delsarte afterwards explained—to enter the room, and seemingly to see his Xavier standing there in the mysterious shaft of light, was a poignant experience to excuse almost any outburst.

"Then began a long talk, and Delsarte found in the quick comprehension and ardent appreciation of this young American a mental and spiritual as well as physical likeness to his beloved son which awoke once more his own hopes and enthusiasm. What wonder that, in this eventful meeting, carriages, appointments and all else were forgotten!

STUDY AND TEACHING IN THE *COURS D'ESTHETIQUE APPLIQUÉE*

"After this, there was no longer thought of Régnier or the Conservatoire, and Col. MacKaye looked on in astonishment at the result of his own suggestion. Delsarte at once accepted Mr. MacKaye as a pupil, and the following week he had his first lesson. Thus began eight months of study, from October, 1869, to July, 1870. Every day he had a lesson, sometimes at six o'clock in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon, as suited Delsarte's convenience.

"These were the last months of Delsarte's active life; and in them, at the very end of his long career, there was thus strangely brought to him the pupil who was to rescue his name from the oblivion which, in spite of the loyalty of a few devoted followers, must have overtaken it.* The popular ignorance of Delsarte's name to-day in France gives ample proof of this. From the very first Delsarte recognised Mr. MacKaye as his co-worker and successor, as well as pupil. He realised that his pupil could not only understand and apply all that he taught, but that he, too, was creative and philosophic. So the hours daily spent together were almost equally divided between practical training—wherein was applied the principle already formulated—and the search together after new applications of known truths and simpler means of reaching desired results.†

* See, on page i, 177, the letter from Madame François Delsarte to MacKaye, in which she refers to Delsarte as "your poor master, whose name you have rescued from oblivion."

† Cf., on page ii, 272, excerpt from an article by Mrs. Steele MacKaye, July, 1892, in which she states: "Delsarte never taught gymnastics. The whole system of æsthetic, or harmonic gymnastics is entirely of Mr. MacKaye's invention. During his study with Delsarte Mr. MacKaye taught something of his own

"So, within five months of their first meeting, at Delsarte's own desire and request, Mr. MacKaye was himself lecturing and teaching in Delsarte's *Cours*, with a success which aroused as much enthusiasm as astonishment in Delsarte's 'lovable, loving and generous nature.' On one occasion, I remember, as Mr. MacKaye finished, Delsarte rose from his chair and, putting his arm affectionately on Mr. MacKaye's shoulder, said to his listeners: "*Voilà ma grande cavalerie!*"

INTIMATE MEMORIES OF DELSARTE

"The first time I ever saw Delsarte was when he, with Madame Delsarte, in the autumn of '69, made us a friendly call at our house, No. 23 rue St. Petersburg.* Coming into the family and talking of every-day incidents, he then impressed me as a simple-hearted, fatherly, affectionate, and dependent nature. In all practical matters he seemed to defer constantly to his wife. He looked prematurely old, more than was warranted by his fifty-eight years. Yet this appearance of feebleness was contradicted by the keen glance of his bright eyes, always alert with all the ardour of youth. It was wonderful, too, the change which would come over him, the moment the subject so near his heart was touched upon. His whole figure seemed to expand. He straightened his drooping shoulders, threw back his head, and the fire in his eye spread to every portion of his frame.

"It was a wonderful experience to sit for an hour in Delsarte's plain, bare room, above the door of which was written, in French: '*Qui rejette le temps, le temps rejette.*' There were two rooms leading from the drawing-room. In the first (about eighteen feet square) the lectures were given; beyond was a smaller room, an inner sanctuary, where Delsarte did most of his writing, and where stood the famous *armoire à glace*, or wardrobe, which was piled to the top with Delsarte's writings, charts, etc.† In the first room, chairs were arranged, usually for not more than twenty people. Opposite was the blackboard, and by its side an armchair in which sat Delsarte. An open space before the blackboard served as a stage.

"The first part of the morning was given to the exposition of philosophy—the explanation of some theory, or chart. This part of the class work—during the last months—was given by Mr. MacKaye, Delsarte from his armchair putting in a word, a nod, or smile of approval, to his little audience. After the exposition came the practical part: the recitation of a fable, a scene from a play, or perhaps a song, any of which was rendered sometimes by a pupil, sometimes by Delsarte himself. When Delsarte recited, then came indeed the miracle:

"As he rose, there stood for a moment before you the figure of an

system of mento-muscular movements to one of his fellow-students, applying his own principles and exercises with a result which aroused Delsarte's delighted enthusiasm."

* In 1869, the MacKayes stayed also, briefly, at 7 rue Obert; in spring and summer of 1870, at Hotel Chaux St. Anton, and 237 Faubourg St. Honoré.

† See Appendix concerning the manuscripts in this *armoire*, which Delsarte desired MacKaye to inherit, and MacKaye's disappointment in those he received. Cf. also page i, 179.

old man, in a long, brown dressing-gown, a foulard kerchief carelessly tied about his neck, on his head a sort of house-cap like a biretta, on his feet the huge, shapeless, felt carpet-slippers so universally worn in France. In another instant there stood—whomsoever Delsarte chose to stand there. It might be Orestes, pursued by the Furies, half wild with terror, present and to come; it might be Iphigenia sublimely calm before her accepted fate. Or there would stand the stupid peasant in Meyerbeer's *Robert*, so hopelessly, helplessly dense that an intelligent cow would seem a Newton to him. Or, in LaFountaine's fable of the Wolf and the Lamb, such merciless ferocity, such obdurate brutality as Delsarte would put into the words of the Wolf: '*Qui te rend si hardi de troubler mon breuvage?*' spoken with incredible hoarseness and coarseness of voice; and then in marvellous contrast, would come a child's clear, sweet treble, with its world of amazed and tender innocence, as the Lamb makes reply:

*'Sire, que votre majesté
Ne se mette pas en colère!'*

"Again for private lessons in voice training he would choose passages with sonorous vowels for his pupils to recite. I recall the splendour of tone and cadence with which he chanted:

*'Ni l'or, ni de la grandeur
Ne vous rendent heureux'—*

a passage which Mr. MacKaye used often to practise, together with those lines in English from *Richard Third*:

*'And all the clouds that lowered about our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.'*

"Once a year Delsarte gave a reception to his friends and pupils. We were present at the last one ever given. It was, I think, in January, 1870. It was charming to see the affectionate reverence in which the master was held by these pupils, past and present, who were of varied ages and pursuits. Some could look back forty years to their first lesson. There were singers, professors, physicians. There were society women, French, English or Belgian, to whom Delsarte had given the art whereby they had made famous their salons. There were authors, artists, travellers, a priest or two; and all these persons—so separated by station, interests and vocations—were, for this one evening, united in a common love of their old master.

I remember, Delsarte sang that evening one of those quaint songs of Brittany, to be found in his *Archives du Chant*: '*Le bien aimé reviendra*' ('My beloved will return'). The song was sung in that veiled half-voice Delsarte so often used: I have never heard anything just like it. This time it was neither martyr, nor peasant, tyrant, nor child, but a joyful young girl, trying—at first almost beyond hope—to cheer the sadness of long waiting for her loved one, by the assurance

that he will—oh, he surely will return! The words come through tears, at first with painful slowness; but, as she sings, the longing grows into hope, the hope into assurance, and with a bright sense of relief and confidence, the song ends. Nothing could surpass the subtlety, the delicate discernment, of this interpretation. All was girlish, immature, yet purity and sincerity itself spoke in those accents of sweet maidenliness.

"One pretty feature of that evening was the coming-in of a band of Confectioners, in their white caps and aprons, bringing trays of daintily decorated *bon bons*. There were, perhaps, a baker's dozen of them—all law students who were then studying with Delsarte.

DURIVAGE: THE MESSAGE TO AMERICA

"One morning in July, 1870, a friend* of Mr. MacKaye's was strolling in the Parc Monceau with an American journalist, Mr. Francis Durivage. This Mr. Durivage, a native of Boston, was then resident in Paris as the foreign correspondent of prominent New York and Boston newspapers. The Parc Monceau is near the Boulevard des Courcelles where Delsarte lived. It being just the hour when Mr. MacKaye was conducting the class, the friend asked his companion if he would like to go and attend it. Mr. Durivage assented, and they went together to Delsarte's house.

"After the class, Mr. Durivage left, on fire with enthusiasm for all he had seen and heard there—for Delsarte himself, his philosophy, and the young American expounder, in his grace, eloquence and zeal. Immediately he wrote a glowing letter regarding Delsarte and MacKaye to his friend Mr. James Oakes, of Boston, who was the *fides Achates* of the great actor, Edwin Forrest, to whom Oakes showed the letter. By Forrest, in turn, the letter was shown to the Rev. William Rounceville Alger, a prominent Unitarian minister and author, of Boston, who was then writing his *Life of Forrest*;† and through Alger its contents were communicated to Prof. Lewis B. Monroe, head of the Boston College of Oratory. This much I mention here, in advance of future events. . . .

THÉÂTRE FRANÇAIS PLANS: DÉBUT OF MOUNET SULLY

"Fascinated, however, as Mr. MacKaye was with Delsarte's philosophy, the main purpose of his studies at that time was distinctly practical. Not only Delsarte himself but many other French experts considered Mr. MacKaye peculiarly fitted, by temperament and natural gifts, to assume heroic and tragic rôles. He had, therefore, put himself in Delsarte's hands to be trained in several parts and was planning

* This friend was Dr. Thomas W. Evans. In a note to him, dated "Paris, July 20th, 1870" (the day after the declaration of war), my father wrote: "Dear Doctor—Mr. Delsarte would be very glad to welcome you to his *cours* on Saturday, next. It takes place from 9 to 11 o'clock A.M. This *cours* will be the last of the season. It will consist of a short lecture, and considerable *pratique*. . . . Very truly yours, James Steele MacKaye."

† In 1869, James Oakes made a contract with Alger, for Alger to write the life of Forrest.

to appear on the French stage. His great facility in the French language and his almost perfect accent and intonation removed the most formidable difficulty. The fact, too, that Mounet Sully, who had just made his French début with great acclaim, at the Théâtre Français, was a foreigner, added to the probabilities of Mr. MacKaye's success.

"Such were the plans and hopes—all, alas, to be frustrated and overthrown by the Franco-Prussian War, which in August, 1870, came upon France like lightning out of a clear sky.

THE BLACK VISION AT THE *GRAND PRIX*

"In May, strangely enough, Mr. MacKaye had experienced a weird kind of vision—a sort of Scotch fey or 'second sight,' to which he was subject at rare intervals—seeming to forecast the awful event. It was at the time of the *Grand Prix*, the great horse-races of Paris. We were then living with a friend named Junius at 237 Faubourg St. Honoré. To watch the celebrations, Mr. MacKaye and I walked from there to the Champs Élysées, where we saw the Emperor and Empress with their gorgeous outriders sweep through the crowding populace under the Arc de Triomphe. It was a scene of dazzling magnificence and gay luxury. As we stood watching, suddenly I saw Mr. MacKaye start back with an expression of overwhelming horror.

"'Come away! In God's name, come away!' he said. His face and voice were agonised. He was staring at the great crowds—so strangely.

"'What's the matter?' I asked. 'What on earth are you looking at so?'

"'I don't know—Sodom and Gomorrah! It's something awful. They're all in black—all of them! It's a deathly black pall over the world. Something terrible is going to happen to Paris—to all France. Come home, Mary! Come home, for God's sake!'

"He was quite overcome; and as we walked slowly home, the great pall of his black vision seemed to obliterate all the joyous festivity around us.

THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR: "ASSISTING" THE EMPEROR

"In July again we saw the Emperor—this time going off to the seat of war as to a fête. War had been declared on July 19th, but no one at first took the war seriously. It was to be but a trifling episode, a little lesson in manners to Germany which it would not take her long to learn. I remember we took the children to see the Emperor pass, and we found that we were 'assisting,' as the French say, in a gay pageant. The only sign of war was in the bands of conscripts here and there, gaily drunk on the omnibuses. But they shook out the long, bright blue-and-red ribbons on their hats so joyously, and sang the popular refrain

*'Nous couperons la tête
Du roi du Prusse—
Oui! Oui! Oui!'*

with such good nature and untroubled confidence, that even they only added to the general impression that the whole affair was a pleasant, international jest.

"Poor, dear, gay, deluded Paris!"

SWITZERLAND—ESCAPE FROM PARIS—DESTRUCTION OF
STUDIO PAINTINGS

"Soon after this, we left the city for a short summer trip in Switzerland. We said *au revoir* to Delsarte, expecting to see him again in three or four weeks at the latest. We never saw him again.* . . . Passing through France we saw the soldiers drilling on the country greens and in the cities. Shortly after we reached Geneva, the news grew daily more alarming, so that it was considered the part of prudence for Mr. MacKaye to return to Paris and arrange certain important business matters. This he did, and though he stayed in Paris but twenty-four hours, he barely escaped.† We were afterwards to learn that all of his own paintings, the collected work of many years, were lost irrevocably when during the Commune our apartments and his studio, near the rue St. Honoré, were looted by the mobs.

"One wonderful painting I have always especially mourned the loss of. It was painted while he was under the spell of Troyon. It was the picture of a cow going along a path in a meadow, snatching a bit of grass as she went, and at her heels a little dog, bothering her. There was great charm and abounding life in it.

"At that time of the Commune, Col. MacKaye returned to Paris from England at the risk of his life. He saw women setting fires with petroleum and people hanged at lampposts. At our apartments pictures and all had disappeared. Our rue St. Honoré janitor, who belonged to the Commune, could give no account of the paintings, saying possibly the Germans had stolen them. Incidentally, the janitor himself had eaten up Mr. MacKaye's beloved pet rabbits.

IN A CART THROUGH THE BLACK FOREST

"In Switzerland our party went on a brief pleasure trip to see Mont Blanc, crossing the Mère de Glace on donkey-back to the Falls of the Rhône. Returning we went by *diligence* from Geneva to Chamonix and Basle, en route for England. At Basle, however, we found all direct communication by rail cut off, so the best we could do, to escape

* "The last time I ever saw Delsarte (wrote my brother, Arthur, in 1923), I had accompanied my father on a long walk through the Paris boulevards to a bewildering maze of side streets, in one of which we entered, where we climbed innumerable flights of worn stairways before reaching a little landing close under the roof. There my father pounded on the door and a gruff, imperious voice bade us enter; but the moment Delsarte saw his visitor, his face was transformed and lighted up with a smile of affectionate enthusiasm. . . . Strongly built, slightly above medium height, with rugged stern features—shaggy, grizzled eyebrows, that shaded piercing gray eyes—all under a heavy growth of rather unkempt grey hair, Delsarte's outstanding feature was his great Roman nose. A heavy grey mustache and imperial beard gave him a slight resemblance to the French Emperor. He was dressed in a baggy suit of gray tweeds."

† See in Appendix Steele MacKaye's own account of his escape.



STUDY OF CATTLE

Pencil Drawing.

(South Egremont, Mass; 1869—?; page 130).



SHEEP GRAZING

Landscape, in oil.

TWO WORKS BY JAMES STEELE MCKAYE



TWILIGHT
LANDSCAPE, IN OIL, BY JAMES STEELE MCKAYE.

the contending armies, was to hire a rough farm cart, and then commenced perhaps the most strangely dramatic journey of our lives.

"The cart—a long, crude conveyance, covered over with a leather top—was fitted out with two board seats running lengthwise and with steps to enter at the back. Into this we all crowded with the children, the nurse, our luggage, and wedged between our laps, our huge dog, Thor, an enormous St. Bernard, which Mr. MacKaye had recently bought at the famous monastery in the Alps. And so we drove through the Black Forest, through Freiburg to Strassburg.

"At night a great storm of lightning and thunder crashed over our low wagon roof, while outside the horses splashed in the darkness and drenching downpour. So we passed through a little mediæval town, the narrow streets dimly lit by overhanging lanterns, that glistened on the wet cobblestones. Stopping briefly at Freiburg, we went at dawn into the Cathedral, where the floor was heaped with straw, in which German soldiers were sleeping. Here we stayed, while Mass was held for the regiment, and watched the kneeling ranks of solemn men receive from the priests their flag, with the holy sacrament, on the way to battle. While we watched, we could hear the cannon booming at the front.—All the way to Strassburg we could still hear that ominous booming. There at the Rhine we continued by boat to Cologne, and thence by train to Belgium. But first Mr. MacKaye had an exciting tussle of eloquence to persuade the guard to let our Olympian St. Bernard share our compartment. From its windows we looked into the young faces of German soldier boys, leaning from windows of an adjoining train, calling good-bye to their friends and kindred.

"ONE OF THE FIRST DRAMATIC ARTISTS OF THE WORLD"

"By the time we reached London, we realised the magnitude of the calamity which had befallen Paris, rendering impractical all our intended plans there. To have to forego his studies with Delsarte and his brilliant prospects at the Théâtre Français, was a keen sorrow to Mr. MacKaye. Only a few months earlier Delsarte had written him in a letter concerning his 'studies, undertaken and pursued with as much persevering ardour as of rich results': 'Barely one more year of such study, my dear friend, will be sufficient to make of you *one of the first dramatic artists of the world—of the world*, do you understand? For *any other man* I should hesitate to have thus engaged my honour as a master and as an artist.' But now the war inexorably barred these studies; so, after a brief time of waiting in England, Mr. MacKaye decided to go back to America, and we sailed in September for New York.

AMERICA: ALGER, MONROE—"FRIENDS IN DEED!"

"There Mr. MacKaye was greeted by the Rev. William R. Alger and Prof. Lewis B. Monroe. These new friends, who were to become intimately a part of our lives for some years, came over from Boston to welcome their young countryman, who had been so heartily heralded by Mr. Durivage in his letters from Paris. Friends in need, they

proved 'friends in deed!' For now rapidly followed new plans and prospects, strangely evolved by that far-sighted fate which had lured Mr. Durivage from his Paris desk, that summer's morning, to take a walk in the Parc Monceau.

"For we had scarcely arrived in America when distressing letters reached us from Delsarte. He had escaped from Paris with his family to Solesmes, his native town, where he was ill and almost penniless. As soon as Mr. Alger and Prof. Monroe heard of this, they suggested that Mr. MacKaye should come to Boston and give a lecture on Delsarte—the proceeds to go as a 'benefit' to Delsarte himself. To this Mr. MacKaye enthusiastically acceded, and in this way they hoped to realise for him a substantial sum. The results more than justified their hopes."

The foregoing is quoted from my mother.—The maturing of the plans she mentions occupied a few months.

WAR-DESTITUTION OF DELSARTE: PLANS FOR RELIEF

Meantime, my father had conceived the idea, with the help of his new friends, of bringing Delsarte himself to America, here to continue his work as the founder of a great conservatory of the arts in the new world. Thus he would be rescued from his distressful situation in France, and master and disciple would again be joyfully united. Fired with these plans, my father at once wrote to Delsarte concerning them and the projected benefit in Boston. In reply, Delsarte wrote to him in a voluminous letter, dated October 9, 1870 (but postmarked "Solesmes, 30 Dec., '70): *

"My dear and well-beloved pupil: Your letter has overwhelmed me with joy, because it proves to me both that you have not forgotten me, and that my teachings are in very truth bearing their fruits in you. I felicitate myself in all respects: I see that I have not been mistaken in the character of your mission. God bless your projects, my dear friend, and if at my age I must expatriate myself in a land of whose language, alas! I have the misfortune to be ignorant, I shall do it gladly, in order to spread the wholesome principles of Art, and, in short, for the honour of our ideas. . . . Thanks be to God, then, I am no longer alone in the world, since Providence has led me to find in you more than a friend, more even than a disciple: a true and valid successor! (*Un vrai et sérieux continuateur!*) . . . Will God permit this beautiful dream to be realised? I do not know . . . for after all the hard trials with which my long life has been so heavily oppressed, I am suffering to-day the most cruel of all.

"I am vegetating here far from every kind of resource, deprived of clothing and of the many things necessary in this rigorous season, looked down upon by those I meet. . . . I am only a poor devil whose

* Translated by my brother, Harold Steele MacKaye.

very poverty is taken here as a measure of his merit. What importance, then, should my judgment possess in the eyes of these men who have made their fortunes selling mustard? . . . At first I and mine thought ourselves too lucky in finding shelter with a cousin, but . . . under the weight of his schoolmaster-like reproofs, I was forced to quit his roof, quite overwhelmed with humiliation, not knowing how to live or how to find shelter! Thus it is that I who enjoy in Paris such a high and, I may say, such a legitimate esteem . . . I, whose company has ever been sought by the greatest men of our times . . . I, who have seen the palace of the Tuileries illuminated and festively decorated to receive me. . . . I find myself . . . unable even to pay for the poor chamber which serves as my refuge against the double inclemency of the elements and of men. . . . It was high time that your letter should come to bring a ray of sunshine to my chill solitude.

"Need I say that this situation gives inestimable value to the benefit which you intend to give for me: but, my friend, forgive this remark which is forced from me by pressure of necessity—between now and then I shall have much to suffer. If, then, presuming upon this benefit performance, you could send to me as an advance sum, however small, say three or four hundred francs, it would enable me to escape my most pressing anxieties and to work with more successful results upon the prolegomena which I have in view the better to carry out what you expect of me. . . . Ever yours, my dear pupil, with all the forces of my soul and heart, and a thousand affectionate remembrances to your dear wife. I embrace you in our S. J. C.—*F. Delsarte*."

LITERARY FRIENDS: "DELSARTE SAVED" FROM WAR-DESTITUTION

In reference to this letter, my father and Mr. Alger had numerous conferences with friends in New York and Boston. In the meantime Durivage had returned to America and had joined the small group interested in Delsarte. Among these in Boston were James Oakes, the friend of Edwin Forrest, James T. Fields, the famous publisher, Edward Everett Hale, James Freeman Clark, Maturin M. Ballou, Jr., son of the editor of *Ballou's Pictorial*, *Ballou's Monthly*, etc., and proprietor of the St. James Hotel, Boston. The interest of these men soon spread to Cambridge, enlarging the group by Longfellow, Agassiz, Paine, and others at Harvard College. All were fired with a fine camaraderie in this common interest. On November 30th, 1870, Alger wrote to my father from 6 Brimmer St., Boston:

"Your letter has come to me like the dove to Noah in the deluge. Its affectionate enthusiasm, its generous abandon, has excited a sweet storm of emotions. So you will come at my word!

"*O, whistle and I'll come to you, my lad,
Though father and mither and all should go mad!*"

"Good! You shall come with Delsarte crowned in your heart, and I will prepare a throne for him in mine, wherein you shall royally seat and honour him. . . . I shall now run down to Oakes and tell him my joy that you and Durivage are coming."

On this trip my father wrote from Boston (December 19th) to my mother:

"Dear comfort wife and friend of my heart: I have just returned from Salem. Saturday when we arrived we were taken to the St. James (where I am now writing), and there had a most superb dinner given us by Ballou, the proprietor—nine varieties of wines and liquors. . . . To-night I go to hear Fechter, also to-morrow night. Wednesday all the heavy artillery of Boston is to be drawn up in Alger's parlour, to be loaded by me with enthusiasm for Delsarte. After I am gone, Alger is to touch them off. They are lionising me well.—Your own Jim."

At this time, despite his being "lionised," my father was in very straitened circumstances; so, to meet Delsarte's immediate emergency, Alger himself generously advanced for Delsarte the sum of 2,000 francs, afterward reimbursed to him by my father out of receipts from my father's lectures in New England and New York. This sum was cabled by Alger himself, through August Belmont, bankers, to Brussels, with orders to dispatch the news by mounted messenger to Delsarte in Solesmes.

These orders were romantically carried out. The solitary night-rider, piercing the Prussian lines in the darkness, galloped into the little mediæval town, awakening Delsarte at midnight, to receive with tears of emotion the tidings of his deliverance from want.—In a long delayed letter of acknowledgment, Delsarte wrote to my father from Solesmes, 30 January, 1871:*

HIS GRATITUDE: MACKAYE PLANS LECTURE BENEFIT FOR DELSARTE

"My dear and beloved Disciple—If ever for a moment I had doubted your filial affection, all these proofs of devotion which you come heaping upon me would even further assure me that in you I have the most noble and the most affectionate of my sons. Oh, why shall I not love you as a father—you *who have come to save my life!* . . . What would have become of me without you—I shudder to think of it! And this good and noble Monsieur Alger! . . . I ought to have written you

* This letter in full, with other letters and data of Delsarte too voluminous to include in this memoir, may later be published in a separate volume, in case of public demand. Delsarte's own letters, which convey an intimate insight into that richly gifted nature, have survived through many strange vicissitudes; and, after nearly sixty years, there are probably few other letters of his extant.

long ago my thanks for the 2,000 francs . . . but it is not possible, since, for more than a month . . . the cannon roars ceaselessly in our ears. . . . We have been overpowered. . . . The Prussians pillage, burn and devastate all before them—and this among a population the most inoffensive. . . . Solesmes, a little open village with no defence! . . . None who has not seen can ever imagine the ferocious deeds invented by these barbarians.

“True, we have deserved this lesson; yet frankly the lesson is brutal. Will France be able to profit by it? For me, I have no hopes of that. The Voltairean spirit has not yet finished its work of destruction, a thousand times more terrible than the Prussians, who at least kill only the body. Ah, my dear friend, France is very ill. . . . In this hurly-burly it is difficult for me to collect my thoughts, to write you as I could wish. It is, then, in great haste that I send you this confused and disordered fragment. . . .

“Specialties—where the sciences, as taught, cramp and confine us—kill common sense, just as specialties where factories cramp and confine the workmen kill their intelligence. In such cases, the sciences are all segmented (*tout morcelées*) and as strangers one to another. Academies are composed of specialists: hence their profound sterility. There is no place assignable, in any academy, to a *savant* or to an artist. As an Academician once said to me: ‘Amongst us, every one is pigeon-holed. We have round holes, square holes, oblong holes, etc.—and each of us fits in his hole.’ *But there is no hole for a man like you!* . . . The sciences and the arts are one—however they may be differentiated through specialties. . . . The greatest obstacle to beginning the study of the sciences and the arts comes from the fact that, in our moral teaching, the study of one science does not lead to another. They are so full of idioms, they have neither the same alphabet, nor the same syntax. . . . I must seek the method which excels them all, and that method I have never sought from men, but from the Holy Spirit. . . . *Adieu—et à toi d’Esprit et de cœur!* I will tell you, when I am more calm, of the beautiful works with which the good God has inspired me.—*F. Delsarte.*”

At about this period Rev. William Rounseville Alger, Unitarian clergyman, author of *The Life of Edwin Forrest*, *The Friendships of Women*, *The School of Life*, etc., was one of the most popular preachers in Boston, crowding Tremont Temple with congregations of high culture and social standing. Soon after meeting Mac-Kaye, he gave up his career as a minister, to devote himself wholly to the study of “Delsarte” and became for years a pupil of my father, devoted to him and to our family. From my early childhood (till the day when he officiated at my own wedding in the old Revolutionary church at Shirley Center, Mass. in 1898), I remember the graceful bearing of his spare, middle height, his superbly intellectual head and clear, rapt, grey eyes. At dinner hours, I re-

call, while all else were partaking of the meal, he would be discouraging with an amazing super-Emersonian vocabulary, terming food "an interruptive impertinence."

By good fortune an interchange of letters between Alger and my father during several years has been preserved, and from their correspondence I shall quote somewhat extensively, as it provides a contemporary history more revealing than after-records of hearsay or recollection.—From New York, my father wrote to Alger (Dec. 27, '70):

"Dear Friend: Preparations for Christmas have completely absorbed my time. . . . Durivage is to write an article on Delsarte. I am to give him the material which I am sure will make an intensely interesting article for the *Atlantic*. He is also to collaborate with me in dramatising W. Alston's novel of *Monaldi*, from which I believe a grand play can be made. . . . I hope I can earn enough next winter to enable me to get Delsarte over here at my own expense, and to found two years hence the school of art whose perfect organisation is the brightest dream of my ambitious soul. My heartiest greetings to your big-souled friend, Oakes. . . ."

(Jan. 6, 1871)—"I send you a few short extracts from Parisian journals. *Les voilà!* These are only a few among innumerable recognitions, by men of talent and position, of the artistic and personal worth of Delsarte. . . . Let great men creep into the grand intellect and fresh heart of that maestro and they will all agree that in his sphere he is without an equal. . . . I will expatiate no further upon the merits of our King . . . the sick lion, who to-day perhaps is patiently supporting the kicks and insults of the asses, who would have fled distracted before the roar of his healthful days. . . . I expect to see Marble on Sunday and learn of his success in despatching by telegram your succor from humiliation to Delsarte. Yours in faithful affection—MacKaye."

(Feb. 8th, '71)—"My dear good Friend: *I carried to Durivage, last eve, the material for the Delsarte article* which he is to send you this week. There was far more than he could use. *I had arranged all the incidents of his eventful life, in their proper chronological order—and thus facilitated the work which Durivage so kindly assumed.* . . . My life is running over with sweetness in the consciousness I have of your friendship—Ever faithfully Your own—James.

"I go to see Forrest to-night with Durivage. He plays *Lear*."

MIDNIGHT: KING LEAR AND EDWIN FORREST

(Feb. 8th, '71)—"My dear, dear Friend: It is half past eleven P. M. 'Meet it is I set it down.' I have seen *Lear*: the God-forsaken, grief-stricken old King himself. . . . Before I sleep to-night, I must write you these words.

"Forrest was grand—sublime—I never want to see another *Lear*. I would not have this perfect image of Colossal Grief in Royal form

blurred by any other pettier portrayal. . . . Oh, what a Godlike genius was Shakespeare's! How one burns to know him personally! Poor tortured fools that we are—afflicted with personality ourselves, we would inflict it upon all things else. Are we not—the very nothingness of finity? The vast unfathomable nature of *The Impersonal* feeds us. Our personality in all its pettiness—is but the product of that inevitable law of opposition which reigns supreme in the universe.

"Personalities rest upon the bosom of the Impersonal—like spots upon the sun. Our grief and vehemence are merely foils which render us more apparent to such Godlike eyes as are the engulfing calm of the immutable. Am I a fool? Verily, I believe that madness is the height of wisdom. Well! Such Gods as are sustain us—in those hours of 'grief that is but passion' which steals upon us when we dare to ponder on what we are, have been—and must be.

"Forgive me—I love you too much not to let you into this weak heart of mine—that, craving personal forms of God, is still taught by all things that he is that crushing mystery—the Impersonal itself. You see I have caught a little of Lear's more Titan madness.—Well, then, has not Forrest made him live at last to some purpose?—Such insanity, methinks, is far, far better than my own inanity. (I revere the letter *S* that it can change the vile into the Sublime!)—Good-night! The soul of a loving man blesses you—let God do what he may. J. S. M.

"Morning—my Friend,

"I dare to trust to your charitable consideration this scrap of incoherency.—There is, however, a certain method in its madness. It is the best evidence I could send you of Forrest's forcible impersonation of *Lear*. All that I might say in criticism of his performance could never convey so perfect an idea of its excellence as this chaotic flight of thought—which shows that Forrest knows how to instil into the sensitive mind a certain savour of the character he assumes.—In haste, ever yours in life, mind and soul.—J. S. McK."

JAMES T. FIELDS, *THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY*, ETC.

From Boston, Feb. 14, '71, Alger wrote to MacKaye:

(1) "Your letter gave me a deep and vivid pleasure. I am so glad you were so moved by Forrest's *Lear*. It seemed to me, too, when I saw it, that I had seen *Lear* himself and not a representation of him. . . . The article on Delsarte will have to go into Edw. E. Hale's *Old and New*, as the *Atlantic* is full. It is a very interesting article.
(2) Just after mailing my note to you I saw James T. Fields. He said he was anxious to publish your article on Delsarte in the *Atlantic* but could not possibly get it in the April number. He said he would print it in the May number, ready for the publishers by April 18th. I therefore recalled it from *Old and New*. . . . Fields also wants to put *your* name to it as author." *

* Characteristically, my father did not permit Fields to do this; so the article, entitled *Delsarte*, appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1871, with the name of Francis Durivage, as its author, with no acknowledgments whatever to MacKaye, who had furnished and prepared all its material.

From New York, MacKaye wrote to Alger:

(Feb. 18th, '71)—“Last Monday I began house hunting and have kept it up all the week.—Last eve I returned home discouraged, and found a letter from Delsarte that gives me immense delight!—You, noble friend, have saved his life. He writes me, that it makes him shudder now to think what might have happened to himself and family except for the speedy arrival of this money. He says ‘it has saved my life, which, perhaps, may still be *worth* saving.’—Let your soul be proud! for you have delivered from humiliation the greatest prophet of Art the world has ever known.—I could lay my life at your feet, that you might walk over it.

“I have seen Durivage. We have had but one purpose, viz.—to secure such an interest in Delsarte as might render it practicable to get him over here, and to establish our conservatory this summer. To this end * I have neglected to prepare my repertoire, and given my whole time to putting into shape a lecture which, I hope, may do some justice to my subject, and rivet at once the interest of the best wealth and culture of our country upon Delsarte. . . . We are looking forward to your arrival with Mr. Oakes. . . . To-day it is storming and raining hogsheads—but I must go out again to find a safe roof to shelter us.—Ever faithfully yours,—J. S. MacKaye.”

(Feb. 20th, '71)—“The fourth act of *Monaldi* is finished. It will do far more for our Delsarte scheme than the sublimest lecture I could possibly produce. It must be played at once. I am so pregnant with it that I must give it birth soon, or die! I could no more carry it in my soul three months than a woman her babe within her womb for thirty months. . . . The first part of April, I pray with a hot heart I may act this play at the Globe in Boston.—May I go on Friday to read it to you and Messrs. Oakes, Ballou, Fields and Cheney?—There is no time to lose.—All that is best within my heart and head is yours forever.—Faithfully your own *Jim*.”

BOSTON: EDWIN FORREST ENTHUSES

Monaldi, however, was not to be produced till January of the following year, for the plans on foot for his lecture in Boston were soon to bring results which swept all else before them for a while. On his next trip to Boston, he met the great tragedian, Edwin Forrest, who was staying with his friend, James Oakes, at the Tremont House. At Forrest's request MacKaye explained to him there the principles of “Delsarte.” Forrest's enthusiasm for the young ex-

* To this end, in short, he put aside then all his own personal ambitions as a Shakespearean actor in favor of the interests of Delsarte, to whose name and fame he selflessly rendered over, as well, all his own contributions to the “Delsarte System” movement which he created at this time. Cf. pages ii, 270-71-72.

ponent is thus described by Alger (who was present at the meeting) in his *Life of Forrest*, Chapter XVII:

"Forrest said, '*MacKaye has thrown floods of light into my mind. In fifteen minutes he has given me a deeper insight into the philosophy of my own art than I had myself learned in fifty years of study.*'"*

My father was now on the eve of his public career.

THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS, AGASSIZ, LONGFELLOW, ETC.

Up to this time, though for fifteen years he had been variously training his capacities in art by indefatigable work, he had not yet come professionally before the public. Now, at the age of twenty-nine, he was suddenly to blaze before it with astonishing brilliance of acclaim. Very seldom, indeed, has an artist ever made his first public appearance under more honourably distinguished auspices than those which heralded his first appearances in Boston and New York. From Boston he received from men eminent in science, letters and education, the following invitation† (dated "Boston, March 13th, 1871"), signed by the Governor of Massachusetts and the Mayor of Boston:

"Mr. James Steele MacKaye,—Dear Sir:

"Knowing, either directly for ourselves, or through the testimony of good judges, how thorough a proficient you are in the science and art of dramatic expression, as developed by François Delsarte—acknowledged to be, in this department, the greatest master who has ever lived—we join in asking you to favour us, and our fellow citizens, at your earliest convenience, with an illustrative lecture on this subject, showing especially the connection of the laws of dramatic expres-

* Directly after their meeting, James Oakes wrote to my father, in a note dated "Tremont House, Friday P.M., March 3rd, 1871: To Mr. MacKaye at Rev. Wm. R. Alger's, No. 6 Brimmer Street, Boston":

"I want to thank you most sincerely for your beautifully unaffected kindness in explaining to Mr. Forrest and myself this morning Delsarte's system, and for your own refined and intelligent illustration of the sublime art. I cannot in a hurried note convey to you how much it gratified Mr. Forrest and myself. From your graphic explanations you carried to us the conviction that it is the only true basis of the highest art and entitles the author of it to rank amongst the monarchs of the world. Again I thank you for so marked a courtesy to Mr. Forrest."

† *The signatories are as follows:* (1) Mayor of Boston; (2) Professor of Biology at Harvard College; (3) Author and Minister; (4) President of the Handel and Haydn Society; (5) Secretary of the State of Massachusetts; (6) President of the United States Agricultural Society; (7) Author; (8) Critic and Essayist; (9) Superintendent of the Public Schools; (10) Poet; (11) Author and Publisher; (12) Secretary of the State Board of Education; (13) Governor of Massachusetts; (14) Author; (15) Collector of the Port of Boston; (16) Director of Physical and Vocal Culture in the Boston Schools; (17) President of the Senate of Massachusetts; (18) Composer and Professor of Music at Harvard College. *See next page for list.*

sion, in the system of Delsarte, with character, morality, esthetics and religion.*

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| (1) Wm. Gaston | (10) Henry W. Longfellow |
| (2) Louis Agassiz | (11) J. T. Fields |
| (3) William R. Alger | (12) Joseph White |
| (4) J. Baxter Upham | (13) William Claflin |
| (5) Oliver Warner | (14) George S. Hilliard |
| (6) George B. Loring | (15) Thomas Russell |
| (7) J. T. Trowbridge | (16) Lewis B. Monroe |
| (8) E. P. Whipple | (17) Horace B. Coolidge |
| (9) John D. Philbrick | (18) John K. Paine." |

ST. JAMES HOTEL: FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE "A BRILLIANT TRIUMPH"

In response to this invitation my father went to Boston, and there on the evening of Tuesday, March 21st, 1871, in the parlour of the St. James Hotel (afterwards the American Conservatory of Music), before an audience of the leading citizens and *litterati* of Boston, he delivered his first lecture on Delsarte and the art of Expression, illustrating it by his own expressive powers in acting and pantomime.

"To-day is the great day of the lecture!" wrote my mother, that morning, in her journal (at "St. James Hotel, 10½ o'clock"). "There is a perfectly *fearful* driving northeast storm. My heart sank as I opened by eyes to it—there is so much staked upon this day; but Jim took the disappointment with such sweet patience that I feel ashamed for murmuring. Will Payson has arrived from New York for the lecture. . . . If those thick clouds would break a little . . . but the rain beats more and more pitilessly against the windows . . . a perfect hurricane of wind and flood!"

That evening, the highly exacting New England audience, unaccustomed to behold the fluent expression of personality or to manifest it in themselves, were carried away by the Gallic charm, yet native American ardour, of the young artist before them, and expressed their delight with unprecedented warmth of enthusiasm.

"What a wicked creature I was," continues my mother's journal ("Wed. morning, 8 A.M."), "to doubt or complain yesterday! Before evening the storm abated, and there were between two and three hundred people here. . . . Jim did gloriously—there were bravos and encores without number. 'Wonderful!' 'Beats Fechter!' etc., on all sides.—Well, Praise God at last for dear Jim! What will his father say?"

So, that next morning, the young artist "awoke to find himself famous." The dynamic ideal in art which he had championed and

* See footnote on p. 149, stating the vocation of each signer.

illustrated in his lecture, the name of "Delsarte" which was there uttered publicly for the first time in the New World, the vivid impression of the artist-disciple in his magnetic grace and militancy,—these tokens of a new prophet in the land were voiced in glowing tributes from his listeners and from the press. For more than a generation the theme which he then launched was to be variously discussed in thousands of articles, fading only after his death into a twilight, from which to-day its essential spirit, under other forms and names, is emerging again into a new morning. In January, 1894, Alger wrote in *Werner's Magazine*:

"At his first lecture in Boston, MacKaye was a living miracle of vital suppleness and intellectual and moral enthusiasm.—All his organism flowed with the lambent freedom of a serpent. A distinguished physician who saw him there on the platform, exclaimed: 'He is a perfect ophidian.'"

WALTER MONTGOMERY; TREMONT TEMPLE; ALEXANDER
GRAHAM BELL

In 1871, the English actor, Walter Montgomery, was one of the most popular idols of the stage in America and England. At the Boston Museum he was a favourite *Romeo* and *Orlando*, supported by that distinguished company.

"After the close of MacKaye's lecture in Boston" (wrote the New York Times, March 26th, '71), "Walter Montgomery, who had been a rapt listener, threw his arms about the young artist and exclaimed: 'You have delighted me beyond expression. Your exposition has so intoxicated me that I feel like a boy of seventeen again. This is the best thing I have ever heard!'"

On March 22, 1871, appeared the following comments, (1) by E. P. Whipple, essayist and author (in the Boston Transcript), and (2) by the critic of the Boston Advertiser (in that journal):

(1) "Mr. MacKaye's lecture last evening was in every respect a brilliant triumph. In spite of the severe storm, an audience composed of our most cultivated citizens filled the hall. The neatness and accuracy of Mr. MacKaye's statements, the grace and ease of his bearing, the exquisite beauty and fitness of his gesticulation—in which justness, modesty and force were equally combined—the marvellous vividness and rapidity of his facial changes, made his auditors express their approval and delight in constant applause. We do not believe that a lecture on the scientific basis of the dramatic art, so rich and valuable in the fruits of the ripest study and skill as this one, has ever before been delivered.

(2) "The impression made by Mr. MacKaye was at once highly

favourable. In person he is tall and slender, but lithe and well proportioned. His face, set off by thick dark hair, is distinguished by an arresting earnestness, thoughtfulness and purity of expression. His voice is deep, and exceedingly resonant, sweet and flexible. . . . Mr. MacKaye recited *Hamlet's* 'To be, or not to be,' a passage from a French translation of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and a humorous lecture in Gallic-English by a Frenchman on Shakespeare. The delivery of the second of these—a monologue of the remorse and terror of the *King of Thoas*—was a masterpiece of the most intense and most terrible forms of dramatic art; and Mr. MacKaye's pronunciation of French seemed faultless.

"As a grand summarising, Mr. MacKaye showed a number of 'chromatic scales' or 'gamuts'* of facial expression, as he called them, so astonishing and impressive as to beggar all description. In exhibiting these gamuts, he stood perfectly motionless, except in his countenance, and, starting from the normal expression, would make his face pass very slowly through a dozen grades of emotion to some predetermined phase, and thence he would descend, reversing the previous steps, to perfect repose. . . . Thus, he showed a chromatic state of emotion running through satisfaction, pleasure, tenderness and love to adoration, and, having retraced his steps, descended facially through dislike, disgust, envy and hate to fury. Again he exhibited the transitions from repose through jollity, silliness and prostration, to utter drunkenness; and made a most astonishing but painful spectacle of his fine face, passing through all the grades of mental disturbance to insanity, and down all the stairs of mental weakness to utter idiocy.—The impression produced was at once very lively and very profound."

In early April the lecture was twice repeated in Boston "to delighted audiences at Tremont Temple." On April 12th, from the St. James Hotel, Boston, my mother wrote to my father in New York,† referring to Alexander Graham Bell, who was then trying in vain to get backing for his invention of the telephone:

"At Mr. Monroe's reading to-day, a Prof. Bell there showed me a copy of a composition a deaf and dumb girl ‡ had written on your lecture, which she 'saw' at Tremont Temple. A letter came from Redpath (the lecture agent) yesterday. To-night a letter comes from Mr. Longfellow, saying every one is pleased about having the lecture at Harvard."

* These "gamuts" were invented by my father long before he met Delsarte. Cf. i, 91. Cf. also statement of F. F. MacKay, on p. i, 363.

† Their New York headquarters—from Sept., '70, to Jan., '72—were at James K. Medbery's house, 305 E. 21st St.

‡ This "deaf and dumb girl" was probably the one whom Alexander Bell afterwards married. During those days of his early struggles and poverty, Bell was greatly befriended by Prof. and Mrs. L. B. Monroe, who warm-heartedly took him in to their own household and provided him with a teaching position in Monroe's school. Cf. page i, 289.



FRANCOIS DELAETE

(From a photograph, about 1869.)

*Je n'ai pas besoin, je pense, de vous parler de ma vie
et de mon avenir. Je vous en ai dit assez dans les lettres que
j'ai écrites. Je me borne à vous dire que je suis toujours
dans la même situation. Je continue à travailler à la
révision de mon ouvrage sur l'histoire de la littérature
française. Je vous envoie ci-joint un extrait de ce
travail. Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'assurance de
ma haute estime et de mon profond respect.*

F. Delaete *à Colmar (Haut-Rhin)*



During the Franco-Prussian War, Delaete—famous master of dramatic art at Paris—almost died of privation in the little town of Solesmes. To succour his needs, MacKaye, his favorite pupil ("bien aimé disciple"), delivered, at Boston, Harvard College and New York, "benefit" lectures (in March, 1871), which first made known Delaete's name in the New World. The above envelope, in Delaete's script, enclosed to MacKaye a letter (30 Dec., '70), of which an excerpt is herewith reproduced, on the reverse side of this illustration. The inscription on this page, beneath his photograph, is the conclusion of the same letter (pages 142, 177, and index).

une autre comme la mienne appelle sur son auteur, à titre d'œuvre, des douleurs proportionnelles à son importance, je crois pouvoir sans me faire illusion, espérer beaucoup des quelques années que j'ai encore à vivre. car je subis aujourd'hui la plus cruelle œuvre qu'il m'ait été donné d'endurer jusqu'ici !

Je suis loin de toute ressource. à peine nourri et privé de vêtement dans cette saison exceptionnellement rigoureuse. méprisé de tous ceux qui me rencontrent à cause de l'extrême dénuement où je me trouve ; et parce que ma misère semble ici donner la mesure de mon talent. Je n'ai, en cette extrémité, d'autre ressource que de cacher ma honte dans la pauvre chambre qui me sert de refuge contre les rigueurs du temps et l'inclémence des hommes. mais, ô ! comble d'humiliation ! je n'ai pas même de quoi payer cette chambre, force que je suis, pour ne pas mourir de faim, d'employer mes derniers sous à m'acheter du pain. . . . les privations que j'endure, le délaissement où je me vois réduit, le mépris dont je suis l'objet, l'ignominie qui m'environne, le chagrin que j'éprouve de ne pouvoir utiliser ici ni mon talent ni ma science, tout cela, et bien d'autres misères dont il serait puérile de vous entretenir, tout cela dis-je, sans vaincre absolument mon courage, a cependant sensiblement altéré ma santé, et franchement ! il était temps que votre lettre vint répandre un peu de soleil dans ma froide et triste solitude !

Cette situation intolérable donne assurément un prix inestimable à la représentation que vous comptez donner à mon bénéfice ; mais, cher ami, pardonnez moi cette réflexion que m'arrache un besoin pressant, d'ici là j'aurai bien à souffrir de futee que pour me procurer du pain pour moi, ma femme, et mes filles. dans ce maudit pays où mes parents me finient prudemment afin qu'il ne me vienne pas l'idée de leur emprunter de l'argent ! Or si, sur les éventualités de cette représentation, précieuse à tant de titres, vous pourriez me prêter, à titre d'avances, une somme de trois ou quatre cents fr., je pourrais par là, me dégageant des plus pressantes inquiétudes travailler avec plus d'aisance, et surtout, plus de fruit,

In her own private journal my mother wrote: (April 18th): "Here is what Mr. Durivage writes of Jim in a letter to Mr. Ballou, which good Mr. B—— has just sent me to read:

"I am delighted to find that MacKaye's success has not inflated him. The grave responsibility of his growing fame appears to nerve his enthusiasm to regular and persistent effort. *I derive the happiest augury from the unqualified endorsement of him by veteran professional experts, such as Edwin Forrest, Matilda Heron, Montgomery, Brougham and Charles Matthews.* Their comments are not unmeaning compliments good-naturedly given, but the keen appreciation of inquiring minds, too thoroughly trained to be imposed upon.

"Col. McKaye, who has arrived from Europe, is delighted with what his son has achieved, and will probably send for Delsarte in June. He says Delsarte is wretched without Jim, and there can be nothing for D—— to do in Paris for at least a year. . . . Col. McKaye will probably at once take hold of the project of building a small theatre, but that cannot open till a year from next fall.—Meantime MacKaye will have played various engagements and be prepared to occupy a permanent and commanding position on a stage of his own.—Certainly no stage *débutant* ever secured beforehand so emphatic and magisterial an introduction as he has obtained.'

(April 19th): "Four telegrams from Jim, still delayed by increasing efforts in New York. I only pray he will not come back too exhausted for his Harvard lecture. . . . This afternoon, James Freeman Clarke called—'blessing his good luck' at finding me at home . . . a twinkle in his eye, merry wrinkles about his mouth. He came to ask Jim to speak in his church on Delsarte. I promised him my noble lad should go."

INVITATION TO HARVARD; CHAS. W. ELIOT; SOME HISTORICAL SEQUENCES

Meantime, from "Boston, April 12, 1871," Edward Everett Hale had written this note to my father:

"Dear Mr. MacKaye: I have learned this moment from the President of the College that on Monday he assigned a proper room for your lecture to Mr. Longfellow who has, I suppose, written you.—Let the lecture be any night except Wednesday. I think Friday too soon now, unless Mr. Longfellow has heard from you already. All the gentlemen join in a cordial invitation.—In great haste yrs, Edw. E. Hale."

Edward Everett Hale, great-nephew of the Revolutionary patriot, Nathan Hale, was then forty-nine years old. Author of *The Man Without a Country*, etc., he was the editor of the monthly magazine, *Old and New*. To-day his statue stands in the Boston Public Gardens. When the above letter was written (four years before I was born) my father was twenty-nine. The "President of

the College," therein mentioned, was Charles W. Eliot, who already had been filling that office for two years. Fifty-four years later, still vigorous in public leadership as President Emeritus, he wrote to me from Cambridge, in 1925, referring to this Harvard invitation to my father, in 1871:

"The letter from Edward Everett Hale to your father is highly characteristic, especially the statement 'In great haste yrs.'"

Of that interval of fifty-four years my father himself was to live but twenty-three. In the light of after history, it is relevant to record that, twenty-six years after the address delivered there by James Steele MacKaye, his son, this biographer, delivered as his Harvard Commencement part, an address "On the Need of Imagination in the Drama of To-day," in June, 1897 *—a date and occasion with which Prof. Thomas H. Dickinson begins an essay on "The Playwright as Pioneer," and takes it as the *starting-point* of his recent volume, *Playwrights of the New American Theatre*, thus disposing there—in one gracious paragraph—of an entire earlier lifetime, fraught with deeply significant pioneering for the art of an *ever new American theatre*, which this memoir seeks to chronicle.

MASSACHUSETTS HALL: 47 YEARS BEFORE THE "47 WORKSHOP"

With more special reference to Cambridge locale is a coincidence in the particular lecture hall where young James Steele MacKaye delivered, by his lecture there, the very first message ever spoken at Harvard College, relating the æsthetic basis of the theatre's art to contemporary human needs and education. When he left the St. James Hotel, Boston, on that evening of April 21st, 1871, he was driven ten miles in a carriage, across the lantern-lit Charles River Bridge, to the country town of Cambridge, where in the Harvard Yard he was met by the Committee Chairman, Henry W. Longfellow, at the door of old Massachusetts Hall.—Concerning his lecture, the N. Y. World commented:

"Young Mr. MacKaye spoke extemporaneously for an hour before Harvard, and Learning acknowledged that never before had there appeared before that solemn conclave so clean-cut a vision of Longfellow's youth, who, when 'the shades were falling fast,' bore aloft 'a banner with a strange device.'"

* This was about a decade before the first courses on modern drama and playwriting, under Prof. Baker's significant régime, were begun at Harvard.

In August, 1925, James V. D. Seymour,* Harvard Alumni Secretary, wrote to me:

"I am sending you an article in the *Harvard Advocate* of 1871, commenting upon your father's Harvard address, given at Massachusetts Hall. This year 'Massachusetts,' after a century of lecture service, becomes once again a dormitory. *It is interesting to note that it served as the home of Professor Baker's '47 Workshop' some forty-seven years after your father spoke there.*"

In the *Harvard Advocate*,† here mentioned, the anonymous student-reporter of the occasion wrote:

"The lecture in Massachuettts Hall, on the evening of the 21st, by James Steele MacKaye, whom a writer in the *Atlantic* calls 'the favourite disciple of the great Delsarte,' was attended by between two and three hundred persons. . . . *The lecturer proceeded to a brief description of the 'scientific basis' of his art. . . . The lecture was listened to throughout with an interest it well deserved. More forcibly than anything else could have done, it brought home to our minds a sense of our own deficiencies in elocution, concerning which so much is said and so little done at Harvard.*"

Doubtless neither my father nor his reporter realised the historic implications of this address. "Elocution" was then the name for that Anglo-Saxon tradition of public oratory, symbolised by the powers of Burke in England and of Webster in America—powers more felt than analysed as a fine art, and identified with functions of state, not with the theatre, which Anglo-Saxons have never yet conceived in its state functions.—But the French, "continental" tradition—based in the deeper social synthesis of the Greeks—conceived such public "Elocution" as inseparable not only from the "oratory" of the actor, but from that larger fusion of arts, including the actor's, implied by the many-sided Art of the Theatre.

On the evening of April 21, 1871, Steele MacKaye—impersonating the ideas of his address, as far as a mere lecture platform could serve as laboratory, was the flame of an electric force for the welding of these two traditions, so long historically disjointed.

* A son of William Seymour, the distinguished stage director, mentioned on pages i, 244.

† Issue of April 28, 1871, Volume XI, No. 6, page 82. "*The Advocate*," writes Mr. Seymour, "was at that time the only undergraduate or graduate publication at Harvard, and was published every fortnight by students in the college." Concerning this lecture the Boston Post commented (April 22, '71): "At Harvard College, last evening, Mr. MacKaye's eloquent delivery was beyond praise."

"Elocution," until that evening, had never before in America been related to that "scientific basis of his art" which young MacKaye, within eight months of his lecture at Massachusetas Hall, was experimentally to illustrate in his first appearance on Broadway as author-actor-teacher-manager—a portent so novel and astounding that (as William Winter afterward recorded*) "it seemed as if *Don Quixote* himself had come again."

NEW YORK: LOTOS CLUB; HENRY WARD BEECHER, NYM CRINKLE

On April 18th, at a reception to him by the "Arcadian Club" group at the Lotos Club, New York, my father spoke again, and there he first met Nym Crinkle (A. C. Wheeler), the then famous New York dramatic critic. Years afterward, Wheeler thus chronicled that event:

"There were present Parke Godwin, George Inness, C. C. Evans, Montgomery Schuyler, Peter Cooper, Lawrence Barrett, David G. Croly, E. C. Stedman, Henry Ward Beecher, William Henry Hulbert, of the World, and a score of other intellectual and educational workers. Not one of them had ever heard of François Delsarte. It was about noon when they sat down to the breakfast, with just the slightest hint of expecting to be bored. Several looked at their watches. . . . At the proper time—after Beecher had made an effervescing speech in MacKaye's honour—a slightly pale young man, intensely serious, rose and talked to them. It was not an assemblage to be wrought upon by mere rhetoric. They were full of pronounced convictions,—art critics, connoisseurs, teachers, themselves. But this young man instantly enchained their interests.

"He painted the divine mission of the beautiful and the true in the world of work, and wrought over the abstract truth of philosophy into the concrete field of endeavour. His air was singularly authoritative. He never pleaded; he pronounced syllogistically. His earnestness, his eloquence, his knowledge, so wrought upon his listeners that they sat there till 5 o'clock. They plied him with questions—metaphysical, scientific, religious: he answered them all—quietly and completely equal to the occasion."

NEW YORK: STEINWAY HALL: "SPELLBOUND AUDIENCES"

This Lotos Club reception, together with reports of MacKaye's highly successful lectures in Boston, brought him another remarkable invitation from a group of artists and educators in New York, to speak at Steinway Hall, in response to which he lectured there twice in April, with several repetitions (May 8th, Dec. 19th) there and in Brooklyn,† the latter by invitation of Henry Ward Beecher

* Cf. page i, 341.

† See Appendix.

and others (in May). The first of these New York appearances was enthusiastically reported for the Herald by Joseph I. C. Clark,* dramatist and poet, then a young reporter, who years afterward wrote me concerning it:

"That night a new voice had been heard and a new sign made visible. . . . His illustrations in gesture were wonderful; for instance, his pose of 'protecton,' when, after an outward ascending sweep of the right arm, he brought it curving downward and forward—palm down, fingers slightly crooked, and arrested the movement suddenly at the level of his hip, stiffening his neck and clenching his lips. You could almost see the shrinking orphan he was protecting from the imaginary burly tyrant.—Then the gesture with which he accompanied his half-smiling, half-piteous apology for reciting and acting *Euripides* in a swallowtail. He seemed in a single sweeping curve to cut off the Greek *himation* and define the modern, outer festal garment. . . . The picture he gave us of the great Delsarte in the clutches of the ferocious forces of the Paris Commune, which the army of Versailles under Marshal McMahon was just then besieging, touched all who heard it. From that April night of his lecture in Steinway Hall the name of Delsarte advanced quickly to be a synonym of art expression the country over."

The President of the College of the City of New York wrote (Apr. 24th, '71):

"Will not Mr. MacKaye visit the college, and address the students, and give some of those remarkably expressive gestures that so delighted and astonished us at Steinway Hall, last evening?"

BOOTH, BARRETT, WALLACK, BRYANT, WARD, PETER COOPER, ETC.

From New York the remarkable invitation of artists, actors, scientists and educators, which preceded these New York appearances, was expressed in the following signed document (dated, "New York, April, 1871"), headed by the President of Columbia College:

"Mr. James Steele MacKaye; Dear Sir:

"The fame of the profound scientific system of François Delsarte has awakened our sincerest interest. Learning that you, his sole authorised representative, have recently returned to this country, with the desire of seeing established here a free school of art, under the presidency of Delsarte himself, where art may be taught on scientific principles, we unite in requesting you to favour us and our fellow-

* J. I. C. Clark, some time President of the Society of American Dramatists, wrote *The First Violin* for Richard Mansfield, *Heartsease* for Henry Miller, and *For Bonnie Prince Charlie* for Julia Marlowe. His book, *The Fighting Race*, comprises stirring poems on Ireland.

citizens, at such time and place as may suit your convenience, with a lecture on the system, illustrating its influence and its application to the development and practical training of artistic genius—the proceeds of such entertainment to be, as you propose, for the benefit of François Delsarte.*

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| “(1) V. A. P. Barnard, LL.D. | (12) Francis A. Durivage |
| (2) Lawrence Barrett | (13) Robert Swain Gifford |
| (3) Edwin Booth | (14) John Gilbert |
| (4) James Henry Beard | (15) Francis Lieber, LL.D. |
| (5) H. W. Bellows, D.D. | (16) Samuel B. Mills |
| (6) Vincenzo Botta | (17) Walter Montgomery |
| (7) John Brougham | (18) Rossiter W. Raymond |
| (8) Wm. Cullen Bryant | (19) Launt Thompson |
| (9) E. H. Chapin, D.D. | (20) Alex. Stewart Webb |
| (10) Peter Cooper | (21) Lester Wallack |
| (11) R. Ogden Doremus, M.D. | (22) J. Q. A. Ward.” |

If dramatic art is related to the history of our civilisation, then this document, with its signatories, and the similar signed invitation from Boston and Cambridge are in their kind important historical landmarks of our country, as well as of the English-speaking world of letters.

Here, for the first time in America, leaders of literature, art, science, civic reform, the university, the church, the stage, and the state united in earnest, active concern for dramatic art. Here, in these documents, the Governor of an ancient commonwealth and the President of a distinguished university join their signatures to the permanently illustrious names of Booth, Longfellow, Agassiz, Ward, Bryant, Beecher, Peter Cooper, with the proclaimed object of furthering in America the establishment—under presidency of a great artist—of “a free school of art, where art may be taught on scientific principles,” with “application to the development and practical training of artistic genius,” “showing especially the connection of the laws of dramatic expression with character, morality, æsthetics and religion.”

Toward the founding of such a school, in the interest of his great teacher, these eminent leaders gave the sanction of their sincere and active interest in a young artist, named James Steele MacKaye.

* The signatories of this invitation are as follows: (1) President of Columbia College, New York; (2) Actor; (3) Actor; (4) Painter; (5) Unitarian Minister; (6) Dante Scholar; (7) Actor-Manager; (8) Poet; (9) Unitarian Minister; (10) Philanthropist; (11) Physician and Author; (12) Author; (13) Painter; (14) Actor; (15) Author and Professor in the College of the City of New York; (16) Banker; (17) Actor; (18) Professor and Author; (19) Sculptor; (20) President of the College of the City of New York; (21) Actor-Manager; (22) Sculptor.



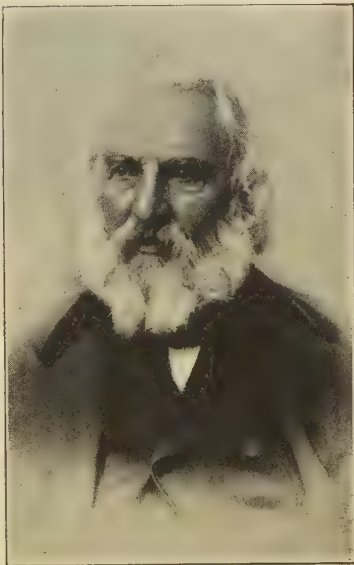
JAMES T. FIELDS
Editor "The Atlantic Monthly" (page 147).



EDWIN FORREST
Tragedian (page 149).



LOUIS AGASSIZ
Naturalist; Professor at Harvard.



HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
Poet; Professor at Harvard.

FOUR SUPPORTERS OF MACKAYE'S DEBUT

Boston and Cambridge, March, 1871 (pages 148-150).

(Of these, Longfellow was chairman of the Harvard meeting at Massachusetts Hall.)



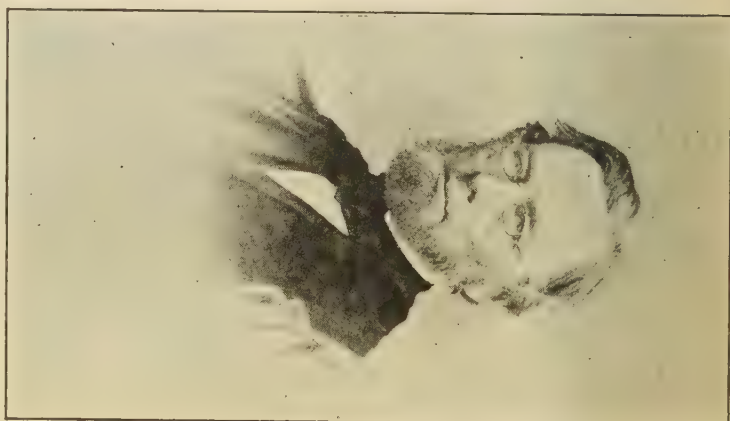
EDWIN BOOTH

*(From a rare, unpublished photograph,
courtesy of the Players, New York.)*



PETER COOPER

*Founder of Cooper Institute
(From a painting by Gordon Stevenson).*



V. A. P. BARNARD, L.D.

*President of Columbia College and Founder
of Barnard College.*

THREE SIGNERS OF THE NEW YORK INVITATION TO MACKAYE

On the occasion of his first New York Public Appearance at Steinway Hall, April 23, 1871 (page 158).

The proclamation is unique. From the auspices and implication of these two documents there might well be drawn a *Magna Charta* for the foundation of a national theatre of the future, deeply based—under the leadership of artist citizens—in “the connection of the laws of dramatic expression with character, morality, *æsthetics and religion*.” When, before or since, in modern times, has such a galaxy combined for such a purpose?

Two other groups of eminent men, united in the name of art, suggest themselves for possible comparison. In 1909, thirty-eight years after the date of these documents, some of the richest men in the world briefly conjoined distinguished names of “society” (headed by J. P. Morgan) and of our national government (headed by Elihu Root) in the attempt to found “The New Theatre” of New York, on a compromised ideal unrelated to the scientific and spiritual laws of dramatic art. In 1904, a group of men eminent in literature and art (Howells, Mark Twain, Stedman, Saint-Gaudens and others) founded the National Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, which since then has united in its membership many outstanding leaders of art and literature.

Neither of these institutional groups, however, has voiced any united, coherent policy, or proclaimed any definite ideal at all comparable with the ardent, enlightened challenge conveyed by the signatories of the above-quoted documents. Nor did the founders of either institution attempt to touch or fathom the religious incentives of art, without which dramatic art can only be an aberration. Even at the present day there appears to be no sign in America of any art movement with proclaimed objects as enlightened as those, in 1871, quoted above. For to-day in the Occident a decadent religion of *æsthetics* has diverged far from a vital *æsthetics of religion*. Yet to-day in India three million people have risen to the support of their prophet, Gandhi, in his serene plea for an art of life based in the elemental religion and the ancient folk crafts of his country. Hopefully a spiritually *æsthetic* vision may yet take root in the fertile scientific imagination of America. If so, its flowering may be the more magnificent for such soil.

The intergrafting and fusion of these spiritual and imaginative stocks of Orient and Occident comprise the fundamental motive of my father's life and art. Speaking of the chorals in his culminating work, *The World Finder*, projected for his Spectatorium (with

its "free school of art") in 1893, he wrote in a letter to me (Dec. 15, 1893):

"You will notice that these chorals are not Christian nor Semitic in character, nor even yet distinctly Pagan. If they suggest any 'ism' at all, it is Buddhism, which is undoubtedly the oldest and most long-lived light of this world."

On the threshold of his artistic career, he championed a religious-æsthetic ideal, at Harvard and at Steinway Hall. In France it was the talisman which had unlocked his nature to respond to the deeply kindred nature of Delsarte. In 1871, money and noble auspices were forthcoming for the practical launching of that ideal, but the project was tragically balked by the death of Delsarte himself. In 1880, it appeared again splendidly imminent, to be thwarted again by a disastrous contract. In 1893, it loomed on the actual verge of superb fulfilment—to be frustrated with finality (for him) by the great financial panic and by my father's resulting death.

This much of comment here is needful, to suggest to the reader the nature of the motives which animated Steele MacKaye's varied activities, chronicled throughout this memoir.

"DELSARTE" IN *ATLANTIC MONTHLY*; FRIENDSHIPS

In the *Atlantic Monthly* for May, 1871—an issue containing contributions by John Fiske ("The Descent of Fire"), Henry W. Longfellow ("Vox Populi"), and John Hay ("Castilian Days")—appeared "Delsarte," an eight-page double-column article "by Francis A. Durivage," for which (as we have seen) MacKaye had supplied all the material, presenting an intensely picturesque narrative of the vicissitudes and triumphs of a great artist.

Most of that spring and summer of '71 my father and mother spent at the Hotel St. James, Boston, where they had "three charming rooms, one a large corner parlour," as guests of the proprietor, Ballou. There new friendships and social functions occupied some of their time. Here came to see them Edwin Forrest, whom they in turn went to see act as *Jack Cade* and *Brutus*. A note from Mrs. Lewis B. Monroe (June 1st) describes her first glimpse of my mother, thereafter her friend for nearly sixty years:

"I call at room 30. I find a Marguerite, in a flowing white robe, with here and there a tint of green—just enough to relieve the rose tint in her cheeks. I am taken willing captive! I surrender!"

Earlier (April 30th) her husband, Prof. Monroe, had written to MacKaye: "I hear your New York lectures are a splendid success. If people are ready to respond, it is all right; if they are not, it is all right, as well. For you have that in yourself which will make your undertakings a success independent of any man's help. . . . But if you are making up a guaranty fund to assure Delsarte's support for a year, count on me for a share—\$1,000 more, or less, whatever is necessary. You have good friends here in Boston who will welcome your return. My means and my influence—both too limited—are yours in the good cause."

And James Freeman Clarke wrote to my mother (from "Jamaica Plain, April 22nd, '71"): "We shall have another meeting of our 'Friendly Union' on May 4th, and our little group are anxiously looking for your husband then."

Besides such sterling groups of liberal thought in Boston and its environs, leaders also of those quaintly self-appointed "elect" who then constituted Boston "society" showed unwonted excitement of interest in this young prophet of a new art culture suddenly descended in their midst; and though the prophet and his wife had chosen their abode outside of the sacrosanct zone of Beacon Hill, nevertheless did the all-high Mrs. Harrison Gray Otis—who held her awful levees of state intellectually attired in a turban—then burst all Beacon'd bounds by actually crossing Boylston Street in her august person to call on my mother at the St. James Hotel!

At "the Garrick Club, June 15th," Walter Montgomery wrote this note from London, where he had just arrived from America:

"God Almighty bless you and yours, dear, dear Jimmy!—I am here, hurried and harried, and now I am glad you did not come. Things are *so bad* in the theatre here—six theatres, all playing vile things. The grand, dear old drama is dead here. America is its only chance. I long to come back.*

Another letter from his friend Alger, who had gone abroad in April, brought tidings of Delsarte. From Vienna, Austria, July 25, '71, Alger wrote to MacKaye:

"My dear friend: Now, now, *now*, I hope to meet the great master himself! I enclose the last intelligence I have had from him in a note from his wife. It bears the date July 6th. I shall go to Paris within six or eight days, and will then at once write to you again. . . . I have given Delsarte a third thousand francs, besides the amount which you sent him by me.' "

* Montgomery "came back," to act—the following September—at the Boston Museum, as *Orlando*. Cf. page i, 163.

DEATH OF DELSARTE

But Alger was not destined to meet Delsarte, nor MacKaye ever to see his French *maître* again. To Alger's letter, my father responded (from the St. James Hotel, Boston, August 8):

"Dear noble friend: Your sweet letter of July 25th arrived this morning, filling my soul with thankfulness to the Divine Father that you live. But oh! another letter came from Mrs. Delsarte, telling me of the death of my beloved master. . . . Dark and selfish regrets flooded my soul at this news. These regrets were wrong to grudge him the emancipation he has at last attained from the many sorrows of this life. You!—Oh, I shall never forget it! Your great heart brought comfort to his last days.—I loved him as a father. . . . Delsarte is with us. He is not dead but sleepeth. No, he doesn't even sleep. He loves us.—We love him.—The love part of us never can die or be separated. I *know* this, thanks be to God and his merciful response to my deep, wild yearning prayers. No! I will not dishonour Delsarte with vain regrets. I will redouble my efforts to do him honour, and to carry out the great work which he has so grandly begun. He will be with me in this—happy, and inspiring me as I work. . . . Your loving Jim."

This deep affection for Delsarte lasted throughout my father's life. It was the chief reason why—in "redoubling his efforts to do his master honour"—he never sought to reap any personal credit for his own manifold and practical creative contributions to that "Delsarte System," which during two decades in America revolutionised many methods of physical culture and æsthetic teaching, started new journals, established schools, and brought from all parts of the country scores of pupils and hundreds of applicants for tuition to my father himself.

In after years, through banalities of the incompetent, the self-seeking and dully commercial, the august name and principles of "Delsarte" became bewilderingly misapplied, misunderstood, and vulgarised, as happens to nearly every noble cause in the chaos of groping democracy. But as such unhappy developments have no fundamental bearing on intrinsic worth and truth, I will not anticipate them here in this first bright period of the auspicious intellectual reception of my father's militant introduction of Delsarte to America.

MATILDA HERON AS PUPIL: PAINTING AT NORTHAMPTON

In New York, Matilda Heron—three years earlier, his adviser *

* Cf. page i, 127.

—now attended his lectures and became his enthusiastic pupil. At one of her *soirées* he was introduced to a young pupil of hers, Miss Ada Griswold, a girl of sixteen. In a letter to an editor friend, Matilda Heron wrote:

“Trust me when I say I consider James Steele MacKaye the greatest artist who has ever lived as exponent of the tragic drama. A pupil of mine (Ada Griswold)—a young girl highly talented—is engaged for tuition from him for a period of five years. I am engaged as his pupil for one year. I am determined to go back home to the dear old stage, where, *dans ma seconde manière* I shall be greater than ever in *Camille*.”

And to MacKaye she wrote (9th Sept., '71, to St. James Hotel, Boston): “Loved Jimmy—Dear Medbery has brought me very promptly the play of *Lesbia*. This is the way I like to see business done. *I wish to Heaven you were as prompt in ministering to your own interests as you are to the interests of others!* But you are a queer genius and hard to regulate.—I hear you are engaged at the Boston Museum for a month. That is splendid.—Give my love to Molly. Be a good boy,—*love yourself!* Stop your ideal nonsense and begin the practical, and ever remember in kind feeling poor me—Matilda Heron.”

Of this Boston Museum engagement of my father—as stage director, not as actor—Mr. Edward Payson, of Lexington, Mass. (a first cousin of William E. Payson), then an actor (with stage-name, Frank Weldon) and a singer in opera, has written to me, in 1926:

“At a benefit to Mr. Walter Montgomery at the Boston Museum (in Sept., '71), *As You Like It* was played, Mr. Montgomery playing *Orlando*, and I *Charles, the Wrestler*.—Your father suggested new business for the scene. We worked it to perfection and it was a success.—Soon afterward, Mr. Montgomery committed suicide, by casting himself from the steamer en route to England. I was told the reason concerned his wife, whom he had married during this engagement. . . .

“Even after fifty-four years, I recall your father so vividly—his fine figure, his classic face, his talks on pose, gesture, ‘contrary’ motion,* how to express commands, how to wear a cloak,—all of great value to me in opera. Out of the maze of memory still remains the vision of his charm, in his acting, his writings, his lectures. To dwell even for a little in his atmosphere was to me—and to many others—a benediction. He has left no successor to his art.”

Directly after this Boston Museum engagement, my father and mother went on a short vacation to Northampton, Mass. There,

* MacKaye’s formulation of the “law of opposition.”

amid the gorgeous foliage of early autumn, by the Connecticut River, this sketching sojourn was a return to the old delight of painting landscapes. My mother has described him to me there, sitting at his easel, whistling to himself with a pellucid trilling melodiousness, reminiscent of the airy gamuts of a bobolink, or a mockingbird.

PLOTS FOR PLAYS, AND LESSONS IN EXPRESSION

Thoughts of playwriting, however, were again beginning to arise and to mingle with those on painting and æsthetic philosophy. A diary-book of his for 1871 contains: "Ideas for Dramatic Scenes; Plot for a Civil War Play; Philosophical Thoughts; Outline of Course of Twelve Lessons on Æsthetic Philosophy." The last comprises the following:

"1st Lesson—Practical purpose and method.

"2nd: Elements of the philosophy of Human Nature, the cause, means, and effect of Expression.

"3rd: Construction of chart for the analysis and synthesis of any given subject, the secret and power of order.

"4th: On the Fundamental attitudes of the body.

"5th: Attitudes and inflections of the head.

"6th: Attitudes and inflections of the hand.

"7th: Attitudes, inflections and oppositions of the arm.

"8th: Expressions of the face.

"9th: Tones and attitudes in gesture.

"10th: Æsthetic gymnastics, gamuts of passion in gesture and expression.

"11th: Principles of power and perfection in gesture and expression.

"12th: Correlation of spiritual forces in human nature and the true source of inspiration in art."

MANAGERS AND MINISTERS: J. FREEMAN CLARK;
F. B. CARPENTER, PAINTER

Later, that autumn, at New York, for the first time professionally, MacKaye was meeting Broadway theatrical managers, amongst others, John Brougham, and D. W. Waller, husband of "Mrs. Waller" the actress, of Booth's Theatre—where so many of the great stars, Booth, Salvini, Cushman, Rignold, McCullough, appeared. For he had now made up his mind to undertake his own first venture on the professional stage, as manager, actor, teacher and author.

On 28th Street, close to Broadway, stood a hall, erected by Peter Gilsey, who had opened it, Oct. 16, 1868, as Apollo Hall, renamed—April 17, 1871—Newcomb's Hall. On Oct. 23, 1871, Thomas W.

Davey (father of Minnie Maddern, later Mrs. Fiske) had opened there an entertainment, in which Susan and Blanche Galton (the latter afterwards Mrs. Thomas Whiffin, still acting in 1927) were playing vaudeville. The property was owned by the Gilsey family, from whom—in the autumn of 1872—my father rented the hall, renovated it, and renamed it the St. James Theatre,* probably in honor of his friend, Maturin M. Ballou, Jr., proprietor of the St. James Hotel, Boston, where he had made his first public appearance, the spring before.

ST. JAMES THEATRE: MACKAYE AS AUTHOR-ACTOR-TEACHER-MANAGER

"This theatre," my mother has written me, "was a little place with small stage and auditorium. Over it was a hall for dancing (Ferrero's Dancing Academy) and often the patter of the dancers' feet broke through the words of the players."

Referring to this moment in the new year, '72, when my father was about to open his first theatre in New York, Nym Crinkle has thus described † the forces, personal and social, which characterised and confronted the young MacKaye:

"Two strains of rare inheritance had met in this young man, to make an anomalous temperament. His was a notably distinguished personality. From his father there had come a masterful masculine mind: that distinctive quality of vision that organises a campaign and a victory at a camp table, disregarding the killed and wounded; that never can measure the disparity between the means and the end: a quality that has crowned generals as geniuses, and buried saints as failures. . . . From his mother came the sense of beauty, the keen comprehension of the logical basis of loveliness, and a mysterious leaning towards the ideal. Upon this substratum of inheritance, under an unexampled French master, were garnered life-long results of study in the atelier, the dissecting room, the library, the laboratory and the classroom.

"Fancy this heavily surcharged young man, palpitating with enthusiasm, girded by influential friends, gifted with a convincing utterance, lighting in New York, and finding no door open for the admission of his great thoughts but the door of the theatre.—Remember, at that time, Lester Wallack was the local favourite, whose greatest work was *Rosedale*; Montague was the young Apollo of the period, Charles

* This St. James Theatre, after MacKaye relinquished it, Augustin Daly took and rebuilt as his "New" Fifth Avenue Theatre.—In 1879, MacKaye reversed this sequence, by taking over Eno's Fifth Avenue Hall, on W. 24th St. (where Daly's old Fifth Avenue Theatre had stood till it burned down), which MacKaye rebuilt and renamed the Madison Square Theatre.—After further renovations (under Henry Miner, after damage by fire), St. James Theatre is now *Proctor's* Fifth Avenue Theatre, still in use (1927), with an entrance on Broadway. Cf. photograph, listed under Illustrations in front matter.

† In the N. Y. World, March 4, 1894.

Thorne was the Roscius, Dion Boucicault was the Lope da Vega. Perhaps it is not strictly correct to say the door of the theatre was open. Young MacKaye's purpose was to force it. . . . He would become a playwright, a histrionic exemplar of the truth."

This new venture enlisted the deep interest of a friend, whose staunch friendship was life-long, the artist, Frank Bicknell Carpenter, who painted "The Emancipation Proclamation." * Of my father he painted a portrait head as *Monaldi* †. A new acquaintance, George Kreisler (the stepfather of Ada Griswold ‡) was also interested in promoting the St. James Theatre project.

Carpenter (whom he had met, through his sister, Saidie, at Alice and Phoebe Cary's "Saturday Nights") was also a friend of Matilda Heron and of her young pupil, Miss Ada Griswold, whom now as his own pupil MacKaye cast with himself in the play which he had collaborated with Durivage, *Monaldi*. In his announcement to the public—theatre, play and players were dedicated to the ideals in art already promulgated by his lectures.

HIS "PLEA FOR A NEW SCHOOL OF DRAMATIC ART"

In advance of the opening there appeared a pamphlet from his pen, entitled "A Plea for a Free School of Dramatic Art," which concludes with the following challenge from this young Quixote of stage reform:

"As has already been announced, this theatre (the St. James) will be a school for the player and the public, having no less a purpose than the elevation of both. If dramatic art retains any of the potency which the pulpit and the press have always urged in its behalf, then this *experiment* becomes one of *social* no less than *æsthetic* importance.

"It now remains to be seen if the intelligent and scrupulous community will regard an effort to remedy the defects of the drama with favour."

In this quotation, I have underlined three words, because they emphasise, at this start in his career, three motives to which he dedicated his life-work: art's *social* service to the community, the *æsthetic* training of artists, and the right of creative *experiment* for leaders in art. How emphatically an "intelligent and scrupulous" *portion* of the community approved these his first efforts is

* Cf. pages i, 104 and i, 235.

† Reproduced, with photograph of Delsarte, in this chapter.

‡ On June 7, 1871, a contract, covering five years, was signed by James Steele MacKaye with "George Kreisler, Mary Dell, his wife, and Ada Griswold," in regard to teaching and bringing-out Ada Griswold as an actress.



MASSACHUSETTS HALL, HARVARD COLLEGE. Built 1718. Photo, 1864.



STEINWAY HALL, 109 E. 14TH ST., NEW YORK

First opened Oct. 30, 1866. From an old print: at right—Academy of Music.

TWO AMERICAN HALLS IN THEATRICAL HISTORY

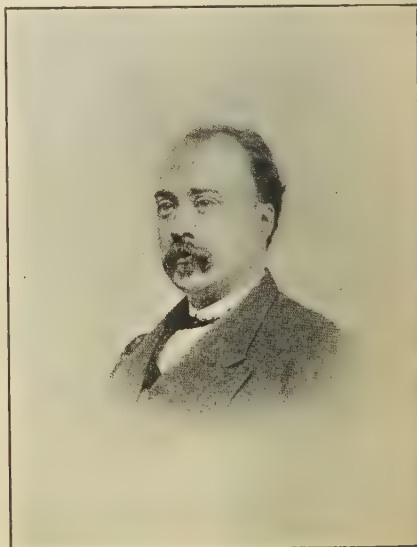
In these halls Steele MacKaye made his Cambridge and New York débuts. At old Massachusetts Hall, April 21, 1871 (with the poet, Longfellow, as chairman), he delivered the first university address, relating the theatre's art to modern education—in the same room where, 47 years later, Prof. George Pierce Baker made history for Harvard and America by his famous "47 Workshop." At Steinway Hall, April 23, 1871, MacKaye's first lecture was hailed as "a new voice heard and a new sign made visible." (pages 154, 157.)



THE BOSTON MUSEUM
(From an old print.)



WILLIAM WARREN
(1812-1888)



R. M. FIELD
Manager of Boston Museum. (pp. 229, 250.)

For half a century the Boston Museum was the leading playhouse of New England. Here William Warren was, for long, chief actor in the stock company, which performed several of MacKaye's plays during the 'Seventies and 'Eighties. Here, in Sept. '71, MacKaye directed *As You Like It*, with Walter Montgomery as Orlando.

evident from the following excerpt of a letter to him from the Rev. James Freeman Clarke ("Boston, Jan. 16, 1872"), prophetic in some of its references to my father's whole life:

"I hear you are commencing your good experiment in New York. It is one for the success of which all who desire the progress of civilisation will certainly pray. But you must not expect any more immediate satisfaction. There are too many difficulties, too many doubters who will continue to discourage you till you succeed, and then say they always thought you were right. Therefore, I have no great expectations of your accomplishing much the first season. But you will show what your plans are, you will interest the best sort of people in them. You will see more clearly yourself what you wish to do, and how you can do it.

"Meantime, all I fear is that you may overwork and exhaust your physical resources. I have seen so many glorious mornings, which flattered the mountain tops with their fair light, permit the ugly rack to hide their celestial face—all in consequence of overwork and over-anxiety—that I cannot bear to see the same thing happen again. I write chiefly to assure you of my sympathy in your undertakings."

Years before, amid the silence and serene "worship of the mountains," out of the yearning search for his spirit's right opportunity, my father had written to my mother—"Ah, when will *my day* appear?" Now, at nearly thirty, it rose before him, indeed "flattering the mountain tops": a sudden "glorious morning," wherein for the first time—and uniquely in the history of our theatre—a gifted artist, championing a high, social-æsthetic cause, stepped from labourious years of anonymous apprenticeship and made his professional début as leading actor, author, manager, teacher and director of his own company, in the theatrical heart of the metropolis.

"*You would rather be captain than mate,*" it had been foretold of him, truly. And so, from the very outset of his public career, he stepped forth and he remained—as his fellow-dramatist, Augustus Thomas, has characterised him—"in his chosen field, that rare figure, a captain."

"I write in great haste, dear Father, to say this: there is a powerful clique * among the professionals and their critics to put Jim down. They've been afraid of him and jealous, so they are doing their utmost to discourage him. He is overworked and worn out. He feels, too, so badly about the money other people have put in that he is sick. His lungs, I fear, are not strong and he may break down. But don't let Jim know I have written you! . . . I'm not a bit discouraged about his future. Dr. Titus Coan, a keen critic,* says he never saw such superb acting as Jim's in *Monaldi*. Delsarte probably knew something when he said he had 'the power to be one of the greatest actors the world has ever seen.' He will make a great name; I don't need Delsarte to tell *even me* that. But he hasn't descended to the usual ways, or bought critics by giving dinners, etc. . . . Cushman, thirty years ago, was kept under by a clique for two years, and Joe Jefferson acted *Rip Van Winkle* for weeks and weeks—the critics calling it stupid and him no actor. . . . Now, father, I believe you know I am not an idiot or a visionary, so I ask you—for his, for my, for mother's sake—to do this: send him a thousand dollars—as so much capital (just put it in that way) towards the enterprise. And, father you can do it this way—not give me any allowance next year and that will make it straight. But don't for the world let Jim know about any of this that I write!"

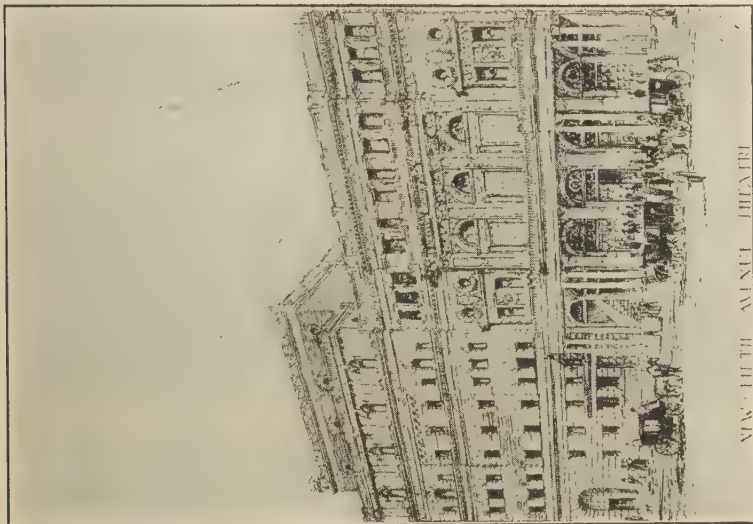
The printed records of biography can seldom truly reveal palpitating motives which created them. After more than fifty years the Muse of Memory will, I believe, pardon the biographer for now publicly disclosing this confidence of "Jim's" devoted sister, in order to reveal warm, yearning hearts beating behind the scenes of a young artist's début.

One more such disclosure reveals Saidie McKaye as the anonymous author of an article, written in retort to a critic who had referred to MacKaye's ardent adherents as "clinging barnacles." Gaily adopting the title as her signature, Saidie McKaye (Warner) wrote to the Editor of the New York Standard (Feb. 17), in a published letter, headed "*Critics and Barnacles*":

"To illustrate the dogged ignorance and immaturity of MacKaye's 'barnacles,' I would like to quote a conversation I had lately with one of that genus:

"*Barnacle*: 'Critics assured Mrs. Siddons repeatedly that she had mistaken her calling till she became an "established success." Booth, Jefferson, Fechter and Cushman were all, in their early careers, despised

* "In rousing the enmity of certain cliques," wrote the N. Y. Standard (Jan. 27), "Mr. MacKaye shares the fate of all innovators who have truth, power and originality at their beck." With reference to Dr. Titus Coan and E. A. Robinson, see page i, 255.



ST. JAMES THEATRE (28th St., near Broadway)

After being renovated, by Augustin Daly, as "The New Fifth Avenue Theatre," (1873). Here MacKaye made his New York acting debut (as Mondai), Jan. 8, 1872.



JAMES STEELE MACKAYE, AS MONDAI

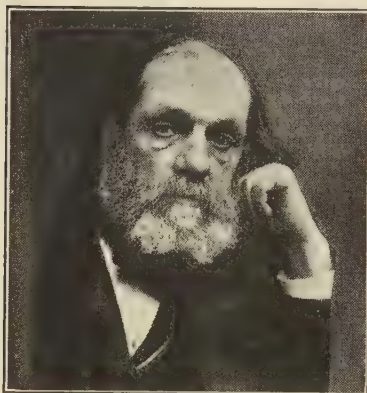
From an oil portrait by Frank B. Carpenter, 1872.



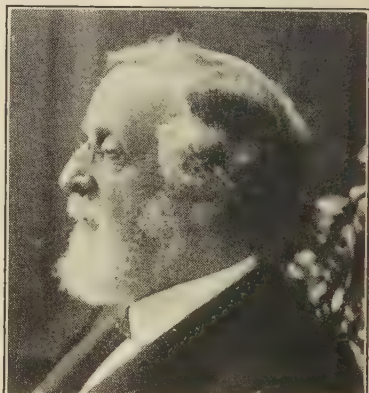
HENRY WARD BEECHER



O. B. FROTHINGHAM



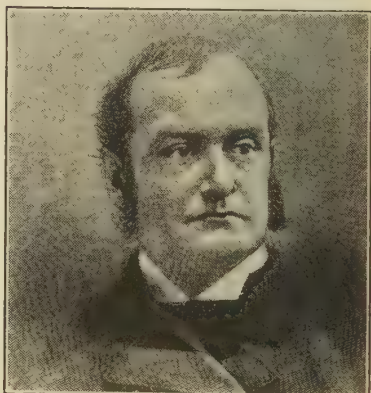
EDWARD EVERETT HALE



JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE



ARCHBISHOP IRELAND



BISHOP HENRY CODMAN POTTER

CLERGYMEN WHO SUPPORTED MACKAYE'S THEATRE POLICIES
(Index).

by the critics. You see, the critics are not the spokesmen of society; they represent, after all, about half a dozen opinions.'

"*Loyalist*: 'Oh, of course! Our critics are "shallow," "no standard," etc. Bosh! I tell you everybody, except MacKaye's barnacles, think him a rapid nonentity.'

"*Barnacle*: 'Well, there are two things to be said about barnacles: First, the term "barnacle" implies some *substance* to adhere to; secondly, the mere fact that a true artist is at first recognised only by a few admirers means no detraction. Why, Charles Lamb, by his own confession, had in early life only "one admirer" *—only *one* "barnacle"! As to Beethoven, for years, the best musical critics of his day pronounced him an unmistakable failure.'

"*Loyalist* (excited): 'Do you mean to compare this meretricious amateur, this pretentious youth, MacKaye, to Beethoven?'

"*Barnacle*: 'Not at all. I merely mean that the abuse of critics and the praise of "barnacles" are not infallible proofs of worthlessness.—As to Delsarte, he was a Frenchman, and Frenchmen of course are Communists. Therefore, if we permit Delsartian acting on American boards, we may soon expect to be burned in our beds, or compelled to turn atheists. . . . In conclusion, let me say, I interviewed, only yesterday, a famous poet on the subject of this MacKaye boy. When I asked him if there was any hope of MacKaye's future success, he burst into the following sublime and burning protest:

'Verily no! Everything is against it!

Trees and teapots, hay-stacks, catamarins and waterspouts!

Tamarinds, chignons, banjos and buffaloes!

The redmen on the prairies!

The red cent in the pocket!

And I! I am against it!

*I! Who might as well have been born fifty millions of years ago,
as not.*

Yes, I! And no mistake!

I, the everlasting! I protest against it!

And yawp with indignation!"

"If the poets agree with the critics, we may be doubly confident of their infallibility! For science itself began with the poets, and 'logic,' says Emerson, 'is but the proportionate unfolding of the intuition.'—Yours for the 'Established Church in Art,' *A 'Barnacle.'*"

"WARMTH OF CONTROVERSY"

Signed by "Rover," in *The Albion* (Jan. 27th), appeared this comment:—"During the last three weeks, Mr. MacKaye has furnished the subject for a very large amount of criticism. More contradictory and radically opposed statements have been elicited by no actor who has

* The early "one admirer" of Charles Lamb was his sister; as this anonymous squib was written by MacKaye's very early admirer, *his sister*—who here so facetiously parodies her friend, Walt Whitman.

appeared for a long time. Such *warmth of controversy* naturally implies remarkable and unusual qualities in the person exciting it. . . . Are personal devotion to dramatic art and enthusiasm for its highest advancement so common that we can afford to pay them no substantial tribute? Whatever may be the fate of this enterprise, Mr. MacKaye has thoroughly aroused the interest of critical frequenters of the theatre and will not soon be forgotten."

Meantime, in a personal unpublished letter to the critic of the Standard, the "young débutant" himself had written (from 3 St. Mark's Place, Jan. 13th):

"Mr. Eli Perkins, Dear Sir: *—One man can never thank another properly for such brave words of uncompromising support as you have written in behalf of the art I am aiming to learn and to teach. However, I cannot resist writing to assure you that you have given me a new supply of inspiration to fight out our little fight. . . . Some papers have represented me as claiming superiority as an actor for myself. This is a mistaken inference. I have endeavoured to say as little as possible about myself. I have harped on one string only: *Let us have a school which shall teach the art and purify the artist, a conservatory not only to instruct the actor but to elevate his art and protect it from abuse.* . . . I distinctly stated that I was a mere beginner—that I had hardly passed the threshold of Delsarte's sublime school. I opened this theatre to show what his system could do in a short time—and while my pupils have been praised, the system which gave them their repose and simplicity has been sneered at. I tried to make the public understand that I offered my present efforts merely as a slight promise of what might be accomplished by a four years' course of study, and hoped they would permit us to creep and walk before they would expect us to run; but we are expected not only to run but to *outrun* all others.

"There are many little conventional stage tricks, which doubtless almost any utility man of the boards may know, which we ignored. The subtle qualities of simplicity and naïveté, of sincerity, of appropriate listening, of artistic massing of light and shade, as well as a delicate and truthful management of contrast and gradation in the art—all these qualities I know are present to some degree in our acting. The thought and philosophy of art are there, and, each day, will become more apparent to every fair mind that has power to perceive beyond the stereotyped tricks of the old school. . . . I hope, dear sir, that you will never have reason to regret your outspoken championship of our cause. Probably every one will imagine that it was but the generous expression of friendship for me. Would it not be well to let them know that we have never met?—Very gratefully yours, James Steele MacKaye."

* With this letter of thanks to a critic, written by MacKaye just after his début, may be compared another, written by him just before his death, to Elwyn Barron, on pages ii, 412-13.

STAGE FAINTING AND MODELLING

Two days after this letter was written, the New York Herald reported:

"The St. James Theatre was the scene of a tragedy within a tragedy on Saturday evening. Mr. MacKaye had acted his rôle of *Monaldi* with tremendous energy to the last act, where he impersonates an insanity. In hallucination he had just clutched at his supposed enemy and thrown him down in a delirium of horror, and—carrying out his part in the play—he himself fell exhausted upon the floor. . . . In a moment his companion actor, at his cue, came to revive him; but he was horror-struck to find that MacKaye had played his part so faithfully that he had really fallen into a swoon of exhaustion. He lifted MacKaye's head, but it fell back as helpless as a corpse. 'Drop the curtain!' he cried. This was done, a physician sent for, the audience apologised to, and Mr. MacKaye was brought to consciousness. It is expected he will go on with the play again to-night."

The part of *Monaldi*, the sculptor, was indeed an arduous one. In the first act, the play conditioned that he should model in clay a sketch of the heroine, his beloved, and to this plastic-dramatic task he brought into play his early studio experience with his friend, J. Q. A. Ward. The stage time for this sculptural task was about a minute; and night after night, during the first two weeks, he actually shaped the clay, with a fury of concentration, into a portrait head in likeness of the actress, his pupil. Finally, however, he resorted to the device of uncovering an already modelled face from beneath an outer shapelessness of clay.

EMERGENCIES BEHIND THE SCENES; SWINTON, DUNS AND "A DANTON"

For my father himself, the period of this production my mother (who acted as his "dresser" at the theatre) has thus described as "a terrible time in overstrained health and finances":

"Frank Carpenter raised money for the project through his friend Frank Moulton, and there was a spiritualist medium, Eleanor Kirk, who helped in the money-getting; also that man, who afterwards became a multi-millionaire through Garfield Tea, a Mr. Densmore, and a group of odd enthusiasts."

Among these "odd enthusiasts" was the radical labour leader, John Swinton—the "wise young Scotchman," to whom Bronson Alcott has referred in the last chapter. Editor and orator, this Swinton—known as "the friend of the people"—was a brother of the Swinton then universally known for his editions of school-

books. John Swinton was an ardent devotee of MacKaye.* From addressing great crowds of working people on socialistic themes, he would hasten to the tiny St. James Theatre, on oft-repeated visits, to revel in the æsthetics of the young philosopher-actor.

"Dear MacKaye," he wrote to him there (Feb. 26), "I am sure you have a great constructive idea in regard to dramatic art, which also has wide applications beyond that sphere. I suspect that you have very hard work, which is not over-encouraging.—Yours with admiration and regard—John Swinton."

Amid groups of radicals and artists, a glimpse of MacKaye at this time is given in these (later) excerpts from the *N. Y. World* (March 4, '94) and the *Star* (Jan. 1, '88):

"After one of his St. James' performances, MacKaye—a long lock hanging over his forehead—was carried away by a party of admiring friends—like a Danton, or a Mirabeau."

"When he first appeared publicly in this country, Steele MacKaye's persuasive sincerity captivated the cultivated of the town. He was in the splendour of an Adonis-like youth: his eyes sparkling, his cheeks bright, his individuality wholly winning. Joined to this, he had a poet's love of art for beauty's sake. He preached this love of art, and he illustrated his precepts by fair forms and phrases that sank deeply into the minds of even the unsusceptible. Even the regnant managers—Stuart, Field, Palmer, Wallack, etc.—at first scoffers, were converted to the ingenuous zealot's belief in beauty."

Meantime the "zealot" himself was forlorn of funds. In order to conserve for the production the money his good friends Carpenter, Payson and others had enthusiastically put into it, MacKaye took no proceeds for himself and moved with his family—"half insane with duns and strains of every kind"—from one small quarter to another—3 St. Marks Place (the Griswold's), the Grand Central Hotel, James Medbery's apartment in Stuyvesant Street, where my brother, James, named for his uncle, was born, April 8th † (in quaint contrast with his later works of philosophy), in the midst of an "Economy of Happiness" strangely devoid of "The Logic of Conduct."

* The *N. Y. Tribune* wrote (March 7, 1880): "Another enthusiast like himself, John Swinton, believed in MacKaye, and was extravagant in his laudations of his artistry."

† The children of my father and mother now consisted of Harold Steele (born in Paris); William Payson (born at 146 E. 35th St., New York,—Matilda Heron's house), and James (Medbery) MacKaye.

"Dear Friend," my father wrote to Alger (from the Grand Central Hotel, in February), "My troubles are accumulating alarmingly, these last days of my season. On the very verge of triumph, I am obliged to fear possible ruin. In consequence I am obliged to gather my few remaining energies to secure certain monies at once, or I may be obliged to close my theatre this very evening. Under this sudden necessity, and the pressure of teaching and anxiety, I shall be intensely occupied till the very moment of appearing in public to-night."

HENRY WARD BEECHER TAKES OFF HIS HAT

During MacKaye's appearances at the St. James, that theatre was a rallying-point for liberal ministers, who made his cause the subject for their sermons. Besides James Freeman Clarke, the eminent preachers, H. W. Bellows, O. B. Frothingham and Henry Ward Beecher expressed their unbounded enthusiasm.

"After listening to the play of *Monaldi* (wrote the Sunday Gazette, Feb. 4), Henry Ward Beecher exclaimed: 'I have been preaching twenty years with some ability and success, but that young MacKaye—with his crystallized Christian genius, his God-given enthusiasm to succeed in this work of reformation—will accomplish more in one year than a host of such men as I in a lifetime.—Yes, Sir, I take off my hat to him!'"

A NEW PLAY, *MARRIAGE*: "QUIET, AND EFFECTIVE— PLAYED WITH GRACEFUL EASE"

In addition to his other exacting labours at this time, MacKaye had completed a new play, *Marriage*, adapted from Octave Feuillet's French play, *Julie*, which had been produced with Mlle. Favart in May, 1869, at the Théâtre Français, Paris, having run there 300 nights. With memories, doubtless, of his own boyhood, my father laid the play in its new American version on "the cliffs of Newport."

On February 12, 1872, *Marriage* opened at the St. James, in opposition to Augustin Daly's production of *Divorce* then playing at Daly's Fifth Avenue Theatre in West 24th Street.* The new play—though attacked by some "conservatives"—was received with general favour, as these first-night comments suggest:

"*Marriage* is a quiet and effective drama, with many touching situations and bold lessons conveyed to society. The dialogue runs freely, marked by an eloquence of diction and by the total absence of any *double entendre*, in which the ordinary playwright loves to indulge. . . . In the part of *Carroll Gray*, Mr. MacKaye's success as the hero of modern society drama, though not so striking as his vivid pictures of all-absorbing passion in *Monaldi*, was sincerely moving.

* The site—seven years later—of MacKaye's Madison Square Theatre.

"With fine figure and classic face, MacKaye's appearance is almost as commanding as that of Edwin Booth in *Hamlet*. Indeed, if MacKaye wore but the 'solemn sable,' the comparison would be complete. . . . He played with a graceful ease and elegance that a veteran actor might envy. But he does more. In the last act, when he bitterly reproaches the unfaithful husband—acted by A. H. Davenport—his utter despair and desolation is portrayed with great effect. . . . Mrs. Keith,* as *Mme. de la Vigne*, is fascinatingly frivolous as the French widow and relieved the sombre tone by her exceedingly clever sketch. . . . For Miss Griswold we have only praise, which is also praise for Mr. MacKaye. She is, we believe, only sixteen, and has been his pupil but three months. Words cannot say more in favour of the practicability of his system and of the dramatic college it is his dream to establish.

"In spite of new and vast attractions elsewhere, all seats and standing room at the St. James are occupied."

Replying to some superficial public criticisms of his play's morality, MacKaye wrote to *The World* (Feb. 18th):

"The play's purpose is to portray the terrible danger of a marriage not founded on character, mutual respect and love. It was intended to excite serious thought on that sacred relationship between man and woman. It does not cater to the vanity of society, and it dares to speak the truth. . . . Its enthusiastic reception by the most refined audiences confirms and justifies me in continuing an enterprise that has not lacked for enemies."

"SUCCESS OF MACKAYE'S DRAMATIC VENTURE"

Reviewing the three months' season of both plays, Nym Crinkle wrote in *The World*, dubbing MacKaye "a very matador of the stage" in exciting the bull-headed critics:

"This young actor and manager is possessed of strong artistic temperament and extraordinary energy. A determined effort, at first, to misrepresent his purpose and abilities, has brought to his support a large number of fair-minded persons, eager to acclaim this young enthusiast, who has penetrated the almost impenetrable prejudices that surround our stage. . . . If he had contemplated martyrdom, he could not have behaved with more suicidal intent than by announcing *a system*. Good system, or bad, the sin is in having one.—'Out upon him!' cried the systemless-acting world, 'we shall hear next of comedians with a science and intellectual ballet dancers!'

* In *Marriage*, besides his young pupil, Miss Griswold, another member of the family "household," who took part, was Mlle. Marie Verginie Hoffer-Harrisard, of Alsace, France, who had been married (Nov. 17, '68), by Rev. Lyman Abbott, to my uncle, James K. Medbery. She was now cast, under the stage name "Mrs. Keith," in the part of *Mme. de la Vigne*.

"But I gladly chronicle the success which has attended Mr. MacKaye's dramatic venture. In the light of his success, we shall perhaps be able to see more clearly what this young artist has accomplished: Without professional sympathy or support of any kind, Mr. MacKaye has planned, and carried into successful execution, a trial season of three months. During this time he has, in his own person, united the varied and conflicting duties of manager, agent, capitalist, actor, author and tutor. Notwithstanding this herculean burden, he has fought his way to recognition even from those who were at first his most bitter opponents."

DELSARTE "RESCUED FROM OBLIVION"

Though Delsarte was no longer living to take satisfaction in the fame his disciple had brought to his memory in the New World, the young disciple was gratified to receive at this time a letter (here translated) from Madame Delsarte, his widow, in which she wrote to him:

"Regarding your enterprise I have at last heard that its success has been beyond your expectations, and I cannot tell you how happy we are to hear this—first for yourself, who so richly merit it, and then for the soul of your poor master, who would have been so proud to hear it and *whose name you have now rescued from oblivion.*

"Here, in his own country, a pupil to whom Monsieur Delsarte gave four years of his life, and who owes to him all her success, has written to the newspapers repudiating her master's teaching, in order to flatter a jealous artist and to secure his protection; while *in America Monsieur Delsarte has another pupil, who has well known how to profit by the short time which was given him, and who now proclaims far and wide the name of his master.** I thank you for this tribute of your heart, for this recognition so precious and rare: it will bring you happiness in your artist's career so happily begun."

On the close of the St. James season, *Marriage and Monaldi* were presented in a final performance, April 23rd, at the Academy of Music, Brooklyn, "condensed and adapted expressly for this occasion."

"THE BATTLE IS OVER—A GOOD START"

A personal summing up of his first theatrical venture is expressed by MacKaye in this letter to his father, May 4th, '72:

"The début over, troubles came in torrents. I won't detail them. The battle is over. Let us calculate the results: I have had no one

* So "far and wide" and selflessly had he proclaimed that name that his own creative contributions to the fame of Delsarte, which he resuscitated, have remained almost unknown to this day. Cf. pages ii, 270-71-72.

to speak a word for me with the press, yet I have won more attention and encomium than nearly any other actor in my profession ever did until he had been on the stage many years. In fact, stronger things have already been said for me than were said for Edwin Booth in his beginnings, and harder things have been said about Booth this very winter than have been urged against me by the most prejudiced. I have secured a position which, at any rate, no American actor ever before attained in less than several years of public performance. This, I think, is a good start; and, after having measured my forces in this fight, I feel more confidence than ever.

"Even from a pecuniary point of view, let us measure the event and what constitutes success. Mr. Daly of the Fifth Avenue Theatre lost \$20,000 his first season, and considered that a good success for the start. Although I had no one to manage for me, I made a better pecuniary success than Mr. Daly at his start, although he had nothing else but management to attend to, and is rated the best theatrical manager in the United States.—Nevertheless I am done forever with management. I have fought out my experience, learned my lesson, and have resolved to concentrate all my energies on my training as an actor.

"I represent a new idea, a new school in my art. I have already won many ardent admirers and supporters. These have been gained in spite of most depressing circumstances, without resorting to any tricks of management, and without backing of capital. So I think I am justified in hoping that I may yet win my way to the foremost place in my profession.

"The next four months are a dead season in the theatre. To prepare myself in my repertory for next winter—the rôles of *Hamlet*, *Shylock* and *Monsieur Morbleu*—I need rest and freedom from harassing embarrassments. In my next campaign I shall travel as a star through the states, reappearing here in the height of the season, well mellowed, I hope, in my parts. George Fields, a manager of twelve years' experience, has agreed to secure me my engagements. . . . At the present moment we have moved temporarily to a boarding-house, 27 W. 18th Street."

"CASHLESS GLORY" AND "THE GREAT SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE"

Lofty conceptions in little cabins!—"Cashless Glory should be graven on our coat-of-arms," my mother used to sigh with a twinkling glance. These *motifs* are manifest in the following letter from my father to Alger, dated from the New York boarding-house:

(May 2nd, '72): "Dear Friend, I received your last letter in the midst of the pangs and problems of a New York May-day—absorbed in the miseries of moving: storing furniture, moving my family, distributing boxes promiscuously in all directions. Thank Heaven, these heroic deeds, so characteristic of our modern civilisation, are over for the present. I wonder if the dignified Romans, and the æsthetic Greeks had their May-day. 'Let me not think on't!' . . . I have

received Delsarte's papers *—I obtained them yesterday.—I have not had time as yet to do more than glance at them, but I am positively certain that I have not been sent half of what he left behind him. . . .

"Thus far, since my return to America I have been working for something more important, it seemed to me, than my own personal glory or fortune. I have endeavoured to promulgate an idea which I believe to be the only practical means of regenerating the stage and of ensuring to dramatic art—the performance of its grandest function in society. When I am forced to abandon this idea, I fear I shall be obliged to abandon life with it, for it seems to have become the very soul of my life.

"It is too late to travel and act this spring, so I am thinking of lecturing for a few weeks. I am at work on a lecture entitled *The Correlation of Spiritual Forces in Human Nature*—illustrated by the marvels of Gesture and Expression. The subject is unique and treated in an entirely original way. It would be interesting alike to artists, theologians, and scientists. As I am absolutely without a cent in the world at this time, I am obliged to resort to this means of securing the money with which to feed my family. I have a sad, interesting instructive story to tell you of my winter's experience. Not that I in any way regret it. On the contrary:

*'Welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
That bids us neither sit, nor stand, but go!'* †

"Concerning my sufferings and my compensations, I must see you face to face—not to complain, but to exult, and to praise the scheme of the universe that seeks to grind men out of animals into gods.

"My family is settled for the present, and I long to run on to Boston to talk over the great school of the future which seems to me to be in the programme of the Creator in His providential development of history. The great ages of Trial are culminating; the last and most terrible convulsions of the old era are about to take place. The marvellous age of Initiate is being inaugurated—the age which is to precede, and usher in, the consummation of the Divine method, which will perfect mankind in Body, Mind and Soul—in Passion, Reason, and Affection. It remains for the great Art School of the future to gather together, reconcile, and demonstrate all the divine truths of Religion and Science—Man the Artist—the Master Artist of the Universe."

"CHEESECLOTH AND ERMINE": "TALMA'S RÔLES AT THE
THÉÂTRE FRANÇAIS"

From the 18th Street boarding-house (through his friend, Frank B. Carpenter), my father moved with his family to Katonah, in Westchester County, N. Y., where they boarded at the house of Webster Hait. Here the pangs of chills and fever were added to

* Cf. Appendix, reference to page i, 136.

† For his early enthusiasm for Browning, cf. page i, 76.

impecuniousness, while they waited for overseas tidings from the Colonel,* who so often enacted the anonymous rôle of Destiny behind the scenes. The tidings soon came, fulfilling another merry adage of my mother: "*Cheesecloth and ermine!*—With us, my dears, it was always one costume or the other—and we learned to shift them with fine ease and celerity."

"Dear Friend!" my father wrote again to Alger (from Katonah, July 31st, '72): "Letters from Europe, opening to me the possibility of realising a great dream of my life—a début at the Théâtre Français in Talma's rôles—have decided me to hurry abroad. I leave Saturday at 2. P.M. I write in great haste—having hardly time to prepare for my departure."

On August 3, '72, with his son Harold, he sailed in the S. S. *Holsatia*, passing through London (Aug. 14th and 15th, at the Charing Cross Hotel) on his way to Paris.

Two years before, his plans for studying at the Conservatoire, under the great director, Régnier, had then been set aside by his meeting with Delsarte. Now, through his father, these plans had been renewed, and in his resolve "to concentrate his energies on his training as an actor" he set immediately about his own studies, with the Théâtre Français again as his goal. By Régnier he was received with great cordiality, and began his private lessons at Régnier's home, 23 rue d'Aumale. Very soon he was not only acting at the Conservatoire, but collaborating in a French play with Régnier himself. To Alger he wrote again (Sept. 11):

"I have determined to accomplish something positive, and worthy before America hears of me again. If hard work, tenacity of purpose, and the art advantages of Paris can do anything for me—my trip to Europe will not be in vain." †

THE YANKEE "INFERNAL MACHINE" AND A "MONARCHIST PLOT"

"Shifting from cheesecloth to ermine" had its attendant adventures. One comic relief occurred at this time. With three days' notice by cable to catch an ocean liner, my mother and "Aunt Sadie," ‡ with the children, had packed pell-mell at Katonah and

* In the Spring of '69 Colonel MacKaye had moved from his 19th Street home in New York to take up permanent residence in Paris.

† In this letter he also tells of enlisting the interest of the Paris American colony in plans for the assistance of Madame François Delsarte and her family, who were in needy circumstances.

‡ My mother's first cousin and adopted sister, Sarah (Stetson Pevear), not to be confused with my father's sister, Saidie (MacKaye Warner). Cf. page i, 128.

sailed Sept. 5th, on the S. S. *Silesia*. At Cherbourg occurred an amusing Yankee-Franco-Prussian embroglio.

On their arrival, my father was late in reaching Cherbourg from Paris, but his brother-in-law, Baron Christian von Hesse, met the party at dock. With true Massachusetts practicality in the technique of household appliances for children, our "Aunt Sadie" had packed in her trunk a hand scrubbing-board, with patent rubber wringer, for washing and drying clothes, then a new device. Left alone with only the German Baron (while the others went to a hotel) she attempted to explain the use of this device to the French Custom Officials, who excitedly and timorously examined it as some new-fangled infernal instrument.

"It's a washing machine," she remarked in quiet Massachusetts English, for she neither spoke nor understood a word of French. "It's very handy for baby clothes. You just turn the crank, like this, and then——"

"Comment vous dites, Madame?"

Here the Baron tried to elucidate: "*Ja, meine Herren—vous savez—une machine pour les petites enfants——*"

"*Ah! Ecoutez! Accent de Prusse!*" whispered the shrugging officials, one to another. But the calm descendant of Roger Williams resumed, imperturbable:

"Then, you see, the baby clothes come out, nicely squeezed dry. That saves a hard wringing."

The official panic grew wilder: "Monarchists! Plot! German spies! A device to wreck the Republic!" they chattered in French turmoil.

On this verge of confiscation and arrest, arrived at last the belated father of the family. Fresh from the Conservatoire, with meticulous Parisian accent, the young future "Edison of the theatre" demonstrated to the protectors of France the patented wringing of baby clothes, rescuing German baron and Yankee aunt from incarceration.

THE SNAKE PASSENGER TO BERLIN; "A *STALLE RESERVÉE*
FROM ST. PETER"

In Paris the family was now settled for some months in an apartment at 22 rue Rovigo, next to that of Col. McKaye (No. 32). In October (17th to 20th) my father made a flying trip to Berlin, to accompany his sister Saidie, who was ill, from there to London. Being as ever devoted to some animal pet, he carried in his pocket a

snake, which unexpectedly eased his passage in a very crowded train.

His compartment was jammed with rather surly fellow travellers. The place grew oppressively stuffy. He asked to open a window for air. His companions gruffly refused. Accordingly, as the train was slowing down at a station, he took out his pet snake and fondled it, letting it glide over his body in slippery coils. When the train left that station, he found himself comfortably alone in the compartment. From Berlin he wrote home (Oct. 18th):

"Arrived here safely last night. Went to the Hotel d'Angleterre, where nothing but swearing hard in English seemed to have any effect. These titled baron chaps have strange powers here. If the devil ever invented anything, I am sure he is entitled to a patent on titles: *Words!*—let us have as little to do with them as possible; for words are such fated liars that to be 'noble' in this world is to be ignoble! . . . I have written a long letter of thirteen pages to Régnier *, concerning our play, so that I hope it will be ready to be presented to a manager soon after my arrival."

From Mentone, in the south of France, where he had gone in broken health, my uncle James K. Medbery † wrote to my mother (Oct. 22nd):

"You give me great joy by saying that Régnier and Jim are *au rapport*. Jim can do such grand things, if he choose. The difficulty with the dear fellow, however, is that he is too Protestant. A good Catholic, if he can't walk into heaven the first day, is content to take lodgings for a while in Purgatory. But when Jim dies, he will step up to St. Peter and say: 'Old fellow, I want a *stalle réservée* on orchestra days, and a grand apartment for myself and children *au premier* in the Celestial Hotel, giving on to the Holy of Holies.'

"*St. Peter*: 'Just now, my friend, we can't arrange your little affair. The fact is we are full.—Suppose you should stop a while at the Hotel du Purgatory. We'll telegraph you the moment there is a vacancy.'

"*Jim*: 'The devil take your old concert saloon and hash house! I'd rather go to Hell.'

"*St. Peter* (with a paternal smile): 'Then go, my babe!'

"(Exit Jim, in a *fiacre de l'enfer à la course*.)

"Exit also your rheumatic brother, who has been *dans l'enfer* a long time.—Heaven bless and protect you and your husband and the children, and the fat babe, James.—He can't be a real James, being fat.—Yours, the lean James.

"P. S. Don't show this to Jim. *Les rois n'écoutent pas la vérité.*"

* On Oct. 28th, '72, Régnier wrote to MacKaye: "J'ai écrit à Wilkie Collins."

† This letter suggests that "iridescent humour" of Medbery mentioned by Henry M. Alden on page i, 113.

"AN ART PROFOUNDLY SCIENTIFIC AND LOFTILY RELIGIOUS" *

On November 1st, "Jim, le roi," wrote from Paris to his friend Alger, in Boston:

"My very dear Friend.—Your letter of Oct. 18th has quickened the pulses of my heart with gratitude for your steadfast love. I have been waiting for my prospects to develop. At last I begin to see day.

"*Régnier* †—*who has been 30 years at the Théâtre Français, and is at the head of the Conservatory—an all powerful man in dramatic affairs here—has accepted me as a private pupil.* I came too late to make arrangements for a début here this winter—but Régnier says that can be accomplished a year hence. He seems deeply interested in my career, and has been extremely kind and attentive to me. We are writing a play together for my next winter début. In the meantime Régnier is desirous that I should appear in London next spring.—He is extremely intimate with the dramatic powers in that city, so that my chances of getting an engagement are quite good. I shall study two or three Shakespearean characters with Régnier.

"I hope to be able to appear on the French stage next year. If I can have a success here, I think I can return to America with the power to serve the great cause of an elevated scientific art to some purpose. I look forward to that work as the work of my life. If I can only be instrumental in bequeathing to the rising nation of the west—a great philosophy, and a powerfully practical method of art, I shall not have lived in vain. . . . I expect to go to England in about a month. I wish you could send me some letters of introduction. *I should like especially to know Herbert Spencer.—I am such an intense admirer of his writings* that it would be a great delight to me to converse with him. . . .

"Enough of myself and my aims! And now that I have once more opened my heart to you—do likewise, and permit me the joy of entering into your hopes, and of palpitating in unison with the great pulses of your own pure and loyal heart—loyal to the honest God of Creative Truth. I think we both of us condemn sentimentalities, and therefore, instinctively recoil from the enervating nonsense of dogmatic mysticism.

"All is mystery—but there are two ways of confronting mystery: with fear or with courage. Fear makes us servile, superstitious, teaching us to obey from degrading motives. Courage enables us (by the effort to solve) to become strong in mind and heart, and teaches us to obey, from the love of the supreme beauty and wisdom. I do not believe in bowing to God—but in facing Him boldly, in opening our hearts to Him honestly—though it be to curse Him. Courage is the great conqueror of every virtue.—Fear is the mean father of every vice. The world perhaps is beginning to realise this.

* Cf. page i, 200.

† A long illustrated article in the French journal, *L'Art* (1876, Vol. 5, pp. 2-10), from which the portrait of François Joseph Régnier is herewith reproduced—gives a critical estimate and record of Régnier, his life and work as actor and theatre-director, of the Théâtre Français.

"Our faith in prayers is waning—our faith in performances is strengthening. Art, indeed, is the most effective prayer of man—a prayer that is sure to bring a response from Providence—it always gets what it asks. It is the most dangerous and terrible mode of appealing to the awful power which vivifies the human heart and sways its destinies. When the art of a people is degraded, their decadence is near at hand; when it is progressively elevated, their salvation and glory are assured. Let them who have eyes to see the light—lips to announce it—limbs to work for it—struggle to make our country the everlasting home of an enlightened, aspiring art: art which is an unceasing prayer for a nobler manhood for men.—Then will the grandeur of our destiny be certain. . . . In deepest sympathy and aspiration, your own brother—James Steele MacKaye."

MENTONE: STUDIES WITH RÉGNIER: *HAMLET* IN FRENCH

The consumptive illness of James Medbery, which was to lead to his death, broke up the Paris winter plans, for my mother was called away (Dec. 21st) to her brother's side at Mentone, where Medbery and his wife were staying at Gard aux Vents—in the same "Villa des Anges" where Robert Louis Stevenson spent the winter before.

In Paris, through his master at the Théâtre Français, my father became friends with Sardou, Sarah Bernhardt and other leaders of the French stage. Meantime the autumn of '72 had been spent in auspicious studies with Régnier in various classic rôles. On a slip of paper I find, in my father's script, this commencement of *Richard's* soliloquy, "Now is the winter of our discontent":

*"Donc voici l'hiver de notre déplaisir
changé en glorieux été par ce soleil d'York;
voici tous les nuages qui pisaient sur notre maison
ensevelis dans le sein profond de l'Océan!"*

Of these studies the Paris American Register wrote:

"James Steele MacKaye, the son of Colonel MacKaye, one of the most worthy members of our 'American Colony,' is now in Paris, studying dramatic art with Régnier, the world-famous master at the Conservatoire. In New York, last winter, Mr. MacKaye introduced a new and more natural style of acting and produced a profound impression. . . . Knowing French as well as he does English, Mr. MacKaye should succeed in Paris as Mr. Fechter did in London. The courage, boldness and originality of his genius lead us to anticipate for him a brilliant career."

Under Régnier's direction my father acted *Hamlet* in French at the Conservatoire. The accompanying photograph (in this chapter) suggests his intrinsically Gallic expression of the part at that

time. Régnier's enthusiasm for his gifts in acting almost equalled that which Delsarte had expressed for his gifts in æsthetic philosophy and expression.

"You have it in you," he wrote, "to become one of the greatest of French tragedians. But you are an American; and in the high art of tragedy, Paris is too conservative of its own, to permit a foreign artist from America to succeed, without confronting him with staggering opposition."

He advised him, therefore, first to prepare himself to win success in London, where also Régnier was personally in touch with the theatre and would give him introduction to leading managers and authors. This, accordingly, he did, giving his pupil letters to Tom Taylor, Wilkie Collins and others, which bore splendid results the following spring. Through a prominent woman journalist, Mrs. G. Crawford (for many years the European correspondent of the *London Daily News*) he was also put in touch with George Eliot, in connection with dramatising one of her novels.

POOR HEALTH: PREPARING FOR LONDON

Meantime, in his irk for independence of paternal assistance, "ermine" had once more been sloughed for "cheesecloth," and ill health (the aftermath of *Monaldi*) had become an incubus, as the following excerpts of letters from him, in Paris, to my mother (in Mentone), intimate:

(Dec. 25, '72): "Best of women—dearest of wives: Merry Christmas! . . . I've just finished the last act of *Silas Marner*. The first act is entirely rewritten. When I get all in shape, I shall consult with Mrs. Crawford. . . . It's desolate enough here in this little room without you.—But I keep my eyes rivetted on my work. . . . Life is a series of separations—from the womb by birth, from the world by death—both painful—both inexplicable! The only thing that compensates is health. Health is the steam that gives power and movement to everything, and in these days of steam there's no hope to a man without it."

(Dec. 30th): "I work all day in perfect solitude, hardly speaking a word to any one from morning to night. (Jan. 5th): I shall try to get an engagement to appear in *Hamlet* next season in London.—I shall plunge into life as though I never had been anything but the son of a bog trotter. I shall try to forget my education and my grand ideas and try to think of nothing but the means of making us independent of others—something short of beggars at least. (Jan. 7th): I am at work on my monologues: Closet-scene, *Hamlet*; Tubal scene, *Shylock*; Jealousy scene between *Iago* and *Othello*, both parts care-

fully studied; other monologues—*Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo*. When I've laid these in, I shall start for London.

(Jan. 8th): "To-morrow I shall send you, by *grande vitesse*, my play of *Silas Marner* and the three pictures of Balzac which I bought for Jim.* I hope that Balzac's ugly face will miraculously brighten Jim's existence.—With my printed notices, my photographs, my scenes well studied, my letters of introduction and my play, I think I stand a chance of working my way out of my present position. (Jan. 11th): Last night I had one of my terrible heart attacks. It seemed as though death was inevitable. (Jan. 13th): "I shall start for London to-morrow morning. Perhaps I shall meet Father there. Address me 1 Craven Street, Strand, care of Morley.

LONDON: FIRST IMPRESSIONS; TOM TAYLOR AND WILKIE COLLINS

(London, Wed., Jan. 16th): "Arrived here last evening. I delivered some of my letters, but found no one in but Mr. Pigott, Mrs. Crawford's friend. He promised me a letter to Mrs. Lewes (George Eliot) by to-morrow.† I have an appointment to meet Wilkie Collins to-morrow at 3. P.M. . . . I am beginning a life of loneliness and drudgery, but it is all right: if the other life ever comes, I hope I shall have won some right to it."

(Jan. 19th): "It is Sunday—a lonesome, dreary day. I have nothing but a bedroom, and when I sit down in it to write, I must have a fire, which makes this letter to you cost more than I can afford. . . . I have had a very pleasant interview with Wilkie Collins and also with Tom Taylor. I breakfasted with the latter and spent the day at his house yesterday. I am much drawn to him—an exceptionally good and earnest man. We may do something together, but it is very uncertain. We sympathise thoroughly in our ideas concerning the powers and responsibilities of dramatic art, but unfortunately there does not seem to be any chance of success for a play such as we desire to produce, or for acting such as I would care to present to the public. The companies of actors here are deplorably bad. The public taste is even more Godforsaken than the actors. . . . As to my getting an opening here in Shakespeare, it seems useless to hope for it. Even those actors with most reputation, like Fechter himself, are a failure in that direction. No manager will put Shakespeare on the stage, for he would be sure to gain nothing but loss for his pains. Our noble theories differ very far from what really *is* the case in the theatrical world. There does not seem to be much of a place for a man of my tastes or temperament. Sometimes it seems very hard to understand why I was made, or what gap in the world I was intended to fill.

* "Jim" Medbery, his brother-in-law, then dying of consumption, was engaged in translating Balzac's complete works. When he died (Aug. 31, '73), he left two unfinished novels of his own, in manuscript.

† "As my friends, the Lewes, live close by me, in North Bank," wrote Pigott (from 28 South Bank, Regent's Park, Wed. night, 16 Jan.), "if you will give me a call on your way to their house, I will give you a line of special introduction."

JAMES STEELE MACKAYE
AS
HAMLET
PARIS, 1872: *in French.*
LONDON, 1873: *in English.*



Above, at centre, a posture of his French rendering of the rôle. At upper right, and lower left, photographs from his London performances, in which he was the first American to act Hamlet in Great Britain. (i, 184, 196, 214.)



MARION TERRY

(Pages 208, 209.)



PROFILE OF GEORGE ELIOT

Pen drawing by Jas. Steele MacKaye
(page 187).



FRANCIS JOSEPH REGNIER

Pen drawing by P. Renouard (page 183).

Régnier, for a generation, was Director of the Théâtre Français, Paris. Under him MacKaye acted Hamlet in French at the Conservatoire, 1872, and with him collaborated a play in French. The accompanying inscription, in his handwriting, is from a letter by Régnier to MacKaye, 1873.

With Marion Terry (youngest sister of Ellen Terry), as Ophelia, MacKaye acted Hamlet in England and Dublin, Ireland, 1873. He also (172-73) dramatised "Silas Marner", by George Eliot.

*Mon cher ami, j'ai vu, et
avec plaisir, mille amis
de votre bien desiré, et
affectionné.
Regnier.*

SILAS MARNER: GEORGE ELIOT AND "THE DRAGON"

"I had a very pleasant interview with George Eliot. She is evidently a very fine woman. The man who calls himself her husband, however, (G. H. Lewes) seems to me to be fearfully beneath her. Doubtless he is a cultured man, but he is also outrageously egotistical, and so void of good taste as to even bully the woman—who has sacrificed everything for him—before me.

"It is, of course, very difficult to get well acquainted with George Eliot, because this selfish old wretch stands jealously between her and every one else. As I sat before them talking, I could not escape an oppressive sense of the fact that she was his victim and his slave. His house is her prison. She is very plain, but with a very strong, intellectual and benevolent face. I should say she was from forty-five to fifty years of age."

A few months later, after my mother had come up to London, from Mentone, she asked my father about George Eliot. "Do describe her to me! What does she look like?"—"I'll show you," he said; and, taking up a pen on his desk, he drew in ink a profile of her face from memory—the sketch here reproduced.* "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "it does look just like her."

Afterwards this sketch was shown to several of George Eliot's friends who all confirmed its strong likeness. One of the most intimate of these friends, Edward F. Pigott, † official Licenser of Plays (who is often mentioned in Cross's *Life of George Eliot*), told my mother he considered it better—in feeling and likeness—than any photograph or portrait of her, none of which he said did any justice to her characteristic sweet benevolence of expression. Since her portraits were extremely few, this sketch, though slight, takes on an added interest. Years afterwards, an interview with Steele MacKaye (Dec., 1879), gives these further details of his first meeting with the great novelist:

"I was ushered into a room furnished richly but unpretentiously and in exquisite taste. 'Mrs. Lewes would see me directly.' She received me with dignity, took my letter, read it deliberately, and then for the first time looked intently at my face, at the same time extending her hand to me with charming frankness. In another moment I was perfectly at home and forgot everything in the presence of this charming woman, for she is the most fascinating and the ugliest woman that I ever saw in my life.

* On same illustration page as photos of Régnier and Marion Terry.

† "Edward F. Pigott," wrote E. H. Sothern to me (1925), "once licensed a play of mine, which I did when I was nineteen. It was called *Gertie's Garter*, and Pigott wrote an amusing letter about 'the Dis-Order of the Garter.' My play, as you will believe, was a Religious Tragedy in blank verse!"

"Her husband, Lewes, was there, and it was not long before I found myself comparing the couple to the Princess and the Dragon. Mr. Lewes sat glowering at me all the time I was there, but after a while I succeeded in forgetting his presence and that he was, as far as could be, the husband of George Eliot, in intellect and genius the queen of all England. . . . I told her of the changes I had made in her story, particularly in the conclusion, which I had found necessary to alter wholly. The dénouement, as I left it, made a really strong dramatic effect, and the author of *Silas Marner* acknowledged the improvement and regretted, so she said, that she had not thought of it herself. . . . I talked with her three hours and I was amazed, when I rose to go, to see how the time had flown. I was to call again the next day to read her my play, in which she seemed to have taken a real interest, but on that very day I received a note from 'the Dragon' saying that 'Mrs. Lewes had, upon mature deliberation, decided not to have her story dramatised.' Of course the play was never produced, and it now lies with scores of other manuscripts of mine, which may some day see the light."

The note from Lewes, referred to above, has been preserved among my father's papers. Dated from "The Priory, 21 North Bank, Regent's Park, Thursday night," and addressed to J. Steele MacKaye, Esq., 5 Craven St., Strand, West City," it reads:

"Dear Sir: After fuller consideration, we find ourselves compelled to forego the pleasure of hearing you read *Silas Marner*. The fact is that the idea of having her novels produced on the stage has always been extremely distasteful to Mrs. Lewes, and indeed the structure of the two forms of art is so essentially different that every author sensitive about his work cannot but be pained at the deformations and transformations necessary to convert a novel into a drama.

"This being the case, she must continue—as heretofore—to hold herself entirely aloof from any contemplated adaptation of her works. She begs me to express her regret at the possible disappointment she is thus forced to entail upon you.

"I remain, dear Sir, Yours truly, G. H. Lewes."

An interesting sidelight is thrown on the above literary dictum of "the Dragon" by the fact (never, I think, known to my father) that, shortly *after* this interview, W. S. Gilbert, the English dramatist, who was a friend of Lewes, undertook—with the Dragon's permission—a dramatisation of this very novel, *Silas Marner*, with quite unsuccessful results on the stage.

POVERTY; STRUGGLING FOR A FOOTHOLD

The young American's struggle for a foothold in London is indicated by these further excerpts from his letters to his wife, in Mentone.

(Jan. 23d): "How I wish I could afford to send dear Jim some presents of books! But I am horribly poor, affairs move very slowly, and I despair of being able to get anything to do for some time. . . . My life is full of torment both of body and soul. I am sick at the frightful degradation of my profession, tortured with the sense of my dependence and my impotence.

"I have found certain good openings before me, but I have not the means to take advantage of them. When I apply for a common place in a theatre, I'm rejected on the ground that I'm too much of a gentleman for the requirements of the business. All tell me my only chance would be for some exceptionally good part. One must wait and work one's way into the confidence of some manager. This takes time—and consequently money. . . . When father was here, he did not mention money matters to me.—I shall not ask him for money, and if he does not offer it, I shall go without it, if I starve. It maddens me beyond endurance to realise what I could do here in London—and how impotent I am for want of means. . . . I had to get a pair of boots. In another week I shall be penniless.—What then?"

A FIRST JOB; REHEARSALS AT THE OLYMPIC: A CHANGE OF CAST

(Jan. 24th): "I have news at last for you. I am cast in a part at the Olympic Theatre here in London. It is the part of an old man with a certain resemblance to *Shylock*. The play is a new one by Tom Taylor called *The Wife's Atonement*. My part is secondary to that of the woman (Miss Cavendish). As to terms, Mr. Taylor, who has shown great interest in me, is to act as arbiter between the manager and myself. . . . In the meantime Taylor is going to write a play for me, so that I hope to appear later in the season in a play especially fitted for me. (Jan. 28th): "Rehearsals have begun for me, dear, and with health and strength I hope before very long to be able to tell you I am earning some money. (*Entre nous*, I am nearly dead broke.) . . . I make my first appearance on the London boards next Monday night; not, however, in any especially important part. It is a minor part I take to show what I can do, and as a special favour to the manager of the Olympic Theatre."

(The Salisbury Hotel, Feb. 3rd): "To-night you will be thinking of me as making my début—and I shall be quietly at work in this hotel. I was cast in the part in which I was to appear to-night as a preliminary test—before being positively cast in the old man of Tom Taylor's new play. After four rehearsals I was informed that I was withdrawn from the part, and positively cast for the old man. For some reasons I regretted it—for others I was delighted, for the part was a very inferior one. (Feb. 5th): The suburbs of the city are very pleasant. Tom Taylor lives in the country ('Lavender Sweep,' Clapham Common), yet is only ten minutes by rail from the centre of the city. How would you like to have a little home, with a nice garden attached, for the children, close to London? (Feb. 8th): I am more than ever delighted that I did not appear in the piece or part which I expected to perform last Monday. The play was a total failure, as

I felt sure it would be when I saw it in rehearsal.—I am constantly hard at work, and hope before very long I may be able to tell you that my labour has not been thrown away. (Feb. 15th): They move as slowly in this country as though they had a thousand years before them. Father has arrived.”

“SUPERB DINNER, ATHENÆUM CLUB” CHARLES READE: 3 NEW PLAYS

Meantime young MacKaye had received the following letter, which was to lead to delightful friendships and important consequences in his career.

“90 Gloucester Place, Portman Square W., 5th February, 1873.

“Dear Mr. MacKaye, I shall be very glad to learn how your interests are thriving in London, and whether I can do anything to forward them. If you have no engagement on Monday evening next (the 10th) will you dine with me at the Junior Athenæum Club (Corner of Down Street and Piccadily) at seven o’clock punctually? You will meet Charles Reade (the novelist) and, I hope, Pigott.—No evening dress!—Very truly yours, *Wilkie Collins.*”

This friendly invitation was accepted. Concerning the meeting my father afterwards said, in an interview (Dec., ’79):

“When I arrived at the Club, I found Reade, Collins and Taylor all there, and, as the other guests arrived, I was formally presented to them by Mr. Collins. This was the beginning of my friendship with these men, which is one of the pleasantest memories of my life.” *

His letters to my mother continue the story of these London beginnings:

(Feb. 20th): “I dined night before last with Tom Taylor. I have been treated with great kindness and attention by Taylor and Collins. Collins gave a superb dinner to me at the Athenæum Club, and invited Reade and Pigott to meet me. I had a delightful time and was immediately invited by Reade to breakfast. I have been dining and breakfasting with celebrities enough to make me immortal, but in spite of it all business moves slowly. . . . I have been rushing round getting as many irons in the fire as possible, and *I have written three plays since I have been here.* The last one, called *Love Matches*, a comedy in two acts, which I finished yesterday afternoon, I read to the Colonel last night. Father expressed unusual approval.

* In these memories, my father enthused concerning “the irresistible logic of Wilkie Collins” and “the bluff, honest, righteous pugnacity of Charles Reade.” In conversation, Reade used to call my mother playfully “my vivacious young lady.”

BOORS AND ARISTOCRATS; LONELINESS; "A LONG WAITING"

"I have kept incessantly busy. I am gradually getting a foothold here. In time I may get an opening of the right sort, but there is nothing but to work quietly, wait patiently and bide my time. (Feb. 27th): The play of the *Wife's Atonement*, in which I was cast by Tom Taylor, has been postponed till next season. I am apparently as far off from an engagement to-day as I was the day I arrived here. . . . I feel the intensest bitterness when I think of the damned stupidity which reigns in society and permits an art so noble in its possibilities, so terrible in its capacity to impress, to fall into the control of the lowest, meanest caterers to human passion, vanity and weakness. No one can calculate the amount of crime this art is breeding to-day in society, and no one could estimate the immense check to crime it *might* be, if controlled by proper influences and persons. . . . But what can one man, however in earnest, do to check the impetuous flood of human heedlessness as it sweeps the civilisation of this day into deeper bogs of rottenness and disease. Let it go to hell—the effete age! Love and kisses to the babies!

(Feb. 28th): "I have been received and dined and wined by Tom Taylor, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, John Oxenford,* etc., as though I were already a celebrated character and, if I could only get an opportunity to appear, I should have more influential friends to back me than I have in America.—*But!* where will I get the opportunity? All the theatres are in the hands of a boorish set of fellows that don't want talent, especially if it be American, unless it is the talent to sing coarse songs and dance buffoon dances.

(March 5th): "My babies are growing. Days full of delightful loveliness are passing out of their lives *forever*. What can ever repay me for this loss? In the meantime I am dragging out a wretched existence in the gloomy loneliness of London. I am tempted to take enough poison to get seriously ill, for the privilege and excuse of necessitating the presence of my treasures. (March 7th): The world, even in the densest crowd, seems empty when you are away from me. I have been working and waiting patiently and hard since we parted. . . . Father seems interested to realise a certain plan for me here—proposed by himself to Tom Taylor. In another week we shall probably know what our prospects are of realising it. (March 8th): Eleven months old to-day! I suppose I shall have to miss dear little Jamie's first birthday anniversary in April!

(March 18th): All our plans to produce *Hamlet* have fallen through—frustrated by a woman—Ada Cavendish, who played fast and loose with us for three weeks, and at last shamelessly broke all her agreements with us.—What next?—I am as much adrift to-day as ever. . . . Tom Taylor and I are to consult with Father this evening. I must say I have been very much surprised and touched by Father's offers and advice—both unsought and both freely and kindly advanced. (March 20th): Life is a long waiting: a waiting for some

* John Oxenford was long the dramatic critic of the London Times—"a man before whose nod the whole dramatic world trembled."

good to begin: a waiting that ends in the baffling silence of death. (March 28th): I expect to start for Paris to-morrow morning, and I have some hopes of finding you there with the babies.—In great haste, as I must hurry off to the Crystal Palace to look for lodgings.”

THE DRAKE, THE SWAN, AND THE CRYSTAL PALACE

“Something good” was indeed “to begin”! Out of dark pent-house thoughts had suddenly sprung a “crystal palace” of dazzling imminence. The “certain plan,” proposed by himself to Tom Taylor which Colonel McKaye was “interested to realise” for his son, was a proposal to assume certain financial risks of a production of *Hamlet*, provided a theatre could be found for the spring season. Always assiduous for his offspring, the Colonel pursued his own methods of affection. Himself an imperious Scotch drake, he had reared a Gallic swan more brilliantly plumed and gracefully flexible, yet equally imperious. Sire and scion, therefore—though deeply devoted—were often nonplussed with each other.

In this case the sire had evidently prescribed a dose of penury, had watched results, and approved his prescription. Accordingly, after three months of chafing in “cheesecloth”—during which, by his own audacity, industry and charm of idealism he had won in London the hearts and intellects of several outstanding leaders—the scion was deemed ripe for “ermine” of the Shakespearean stage, and this the Colonel stood ready to assist, if a stage could be found.

As a theatrical producer, Tom Taylor had long been ambitious to produce *Hamlet* with a version and stage business of his own. In young MacKaye he was confident of his actor. The Colonel’s assistance, therefore, though very modest in itself, was sufficient to clinch a decision already warmly desired. In a note to MacKaye, Taylor wrote, April 25, 1873:

“I have received your father’s £200 and paid it in to my bank. He stipulates for repayment out of the first net profits, and that the costumes and properties purchased with the money are to be your property. This is all right, and as I understood it was to be.”

But how could a proper theatre be secured? One possibility offered. It was already late to get a theatre in the heart of the city. But a new play by Wilkie Collins was to open, with Miss Cavendish in the title rôle, at the Olympic. Might this opening be deferred to make room for *Hamlet* beforehand? To ascertain this, Taylor and MacKaye had gone to see Wilkie Collins. This note (March 19th) from Collins to Taylor followed:

"I was sorry not to be able to see you and Mr. MacKaye this morning—but I am chained to my desk until my work is done. The closing numbers of *The New Magdalen* claim all my time. . . . I am most unwilling to stand in the way of your plans and Mr. MacKaye's. The matter stands thus. Monday, May 19th, is the day fixed for the republication of my story in book form. Both Miss Cavendish and I think it important to bring out the dramatic version before this—more especially as the piece will be played in America (by arrangement with me) in the course of next month. It is certainly a risk, under these circumstances, to delay the production in London by a week. But I do not feel justified in taking the sole responsibility of decision on myself, as other interests are at stake in this matter besides mine—and I will ask your permission to communicate with Miss Cavendish before I definitely reply. I will write her at once, and you shall hear from me again—at the Garrick—to-morrow."

The decision of Miss Cavendish, however (as mentioned in J. S. M.'s letter of March 18th) was unfavourable.

A FLYING TRIP TO PARIS: CHARLES READE'S FRENCH PLAY

Accordingly it was decided to take the next best theatre obtainable, a place used for opera, outside of the regular theatre district. With these plans under way MacKaye returned briefly to Paris where his family—coming from Mentone—joyously rejoined him at the Rue Rovigo. From here he wrote to his friend Alger in Boston (April 5th):

"Dearly beloved friend—After all my working and waiting on this side of the water, I begin to see the chance of great compensation. I am to make my *début* in England on the 3rd of May at the Crystal Palace Opera House. I am to play *Hamlet*, which is to be revived in the most artistic manner under the direct supervision of Mr. Tom Taylor, the dramatic author. Mr. Taylor stands very high in the estimation of the cultural circles of England, both as a man and an author. He is an intimate friend of the best in the literary world and of the aristocracy, among whom this enterprise excites great interest. . . . I am here only for a few days, to get my costumes for *Hamlet*. I run through the play with Régnier at the Conservatoire."

He stayed about a fortnight in Paris, where Charles Reade wrote to him (from 2 Albert Terrace, London, Apr. 5th):

"I have been wondering where you were. I might have guessed. I am much pleased to hear that you are to get an opening with *Hamlet*. I will go down to see you.—There used to be in Paris an actor called Rouvière who, I believe, has made a particular study of *Hamlet*. If you are collecting French ideas, in which I think you are very wise, might it be worth while to gauge this intellect?—Probably not.

"I can give you one instruction: 'Don't speak one line of that part as if another man had written it.' Carry out that precept, and you must be a better *Hamlet* than ever I saw: for there never was one of them that spoke the words as if they really came out of his own head. As soon as you return, shall be glad to get the question of the *Faubourg St. Germain* settled one way or other."

The *Faubourg St. Germain* was a French play by Reade which MacKaye evidently had tried then to place for him in Paris as well as (earlier) in London. In an interview (Dec., 1879) MacKaye said concerning it:

"Few people know that Charles Reade ever wrote a French play. I found it out in a curious way. One morning I dropped into his rooms and found him lying flat on the floor before an open fire, trying to 'bake his rheumatism'. 'Come in, old boy,' he said, 'don't mind me.'

"We began to talk about plays and finally he said: 'You never knew, did you, that I once wrote a French play? I wonder where I put it!' He forgot his aches for a moment, jumped up and took from a cabinet the comedy, which he had printed, as it was written in French. I took it with some curiosity; he again stretched himself on the floor and I began mechanically to read aloud. . . . I went on to the end. My audience gradually raised himself to a sitting posture, rubbed his hands with undisguised delight, laughed heartily at his jokes—for the piece was very witty, and he had not read it for years—and when I finished, after an hour's reading, he jumped up, saying that I had given him the most delightful entertainment he had had for a long time." *

On April 16th, my father was back again at the Salisbury Hotel, London, where my mother accompanied him, leaving the children in Paris with the mothering "Aunt Sadie," to whom he wrote back:

"There was no curling iron among my costumes! It must be in Paris. Can it not come over with Molly's dress? I am so glad Molly came with me. I am terrified at the amount of work before me and am sure I should never accomplish it properly without her help. Kiss my precious babies for me and tell them that I am saving up heaps of new and beautiful stories for them. God be with you, dearest and most faithful of friends to us and ours!"

* An epilogue to this French play incident is the following note, apparently from an agent:

"French Plays—Royalty Theatre, Dean Street, Oxford Street, London W., March 14, 1873.

"MacKaye, Esq., Salisbury Hotel (Fleet Street).

"Dear Sir: If you will kindly favour us with a call at the theatre any evening next week, between 8 and 9 p.m., we shall be glad to talk to you in reference to Mr. Reade's piece, *Le Faubourg St. Germain*.—Yours Faithfully, Valnay & Pitrou."

STRENUOUS REHEARSALS; FORBES ROBERTSON "LOOKING FOR A JOB"

The next three weeks were strenuously engaged in preparations * for the production—appointments at the Garrick Club with Tom Taylor, actors and managers, rehearsals at the Queen's and Haymarket Theatres, casting the parts, etc. In the history of *Hamlets*, a glimpse of Johnston Forbes Robertson, then an unknighthed "juvenile," has its place here. "I first met your father," Sir Johnston told me, years afterwards, "when he was about to play *Hamlet* in London, and I was looking for a job, but he had no part for me at the time." On another occasion,† Tom Taylor wrote to my father:

"As to a leading 'juvenile' man, I have had no hesitation in recommending you Forbes Robertson, who is painter as well as actor, and who has grace, fervour and imagination far beyond any of the young men of our stage."

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

In the midst of these preparations, the bright anticipations of my father and mother were tinged darkly by the shadow of impending death. Their brother, James Medbery, had but a brief while longer to live. From Mentone (Apr. 27th) he wrote to my mother this "Ave atque vale" of his affectionate Godspeed:

"My darling sister: How my heart is with you in the success of dear Jim! And I know he will succeed. It is a faith born not of ordinary reasoning, but of a grand law which I have picked up in my illness. I'm too weak and stupid to explain it now. . . . Tell Jim that my soul—what there is left of it—is all his; and about the only thing that keeps me above water now is my determination that 'these eyes shall behold this sight' of our dear *Monaldi* victorious, glorified, and on the sure road to fortune. . . . Ah, sister, what things I have to say to you that yet I can't say, and which now will probably never be said. . . . You and Jim are darlings! Tom Taylor is wisdom itself; and, if it does not turn out that I am offered up as an expiatory sacrifice to bring Jim solid success, you may assure him that I will come down and quarter myself on his bounty with no compunctions whatever. The good God watch over you both and make you prevail; and dear love—my only sister and all—I wish you every happiness, and the peace of peace.—James."

BRILLIANT DÉBUT AS *HAMLET*: COMPARISONS KEAN AND KEMBLE;
JOSEPH SEVERN, THOMAS HUGHES, ETC.

He did live to have his wish and see "*Monaldi* victorious" as

* On April 30, '73, Colonel McKaye wrote to him: "As to your nervousness—I think the living *Hamlet* was a little dyspeptic at times and of course nervous, and no wonder, poor fellow! So perhaps your being a little nervous will only help you to present him the more *really*."

† Cf. page i, 318.

Hamlet. On May 3rd, 1873, at the Crystal Palace, Tom Taylor's production had its opening performance.* Concerning its reception the London Correspondent of *The Golden Age* † wrote:

"In spite of predictions of penny-a-liners, in spite of a miserable barn of an opera house, in which the acoustics are of the worst, and although this experiment of Tom Taylor's is outside of the theatrical cliques, so that it was to be expected there would be the most unsparing criticism, Mr. MacKaye has made a solid and legitimate success. . . . The audiences have been superb. The first day, people waited outside three hours for admission. MacKaye had five rousing calls before the curtain, with bravos, cheers and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs. Mr. Joseph Severn, the artist (brother-in-law of Ruskin and the poet Keats' friend), stated: '*I have never seen a Hamlet that equalled MacKaye's.*' One English noblewoman said to Mr. Taylor: '*We have seen nothing like it since Kemble.*'"

Frank Archer, who then acted the *King* to my father's *Hamlet*, has written in his volume, *An Actor's Note Book*:

"At the Crystal Palace, with its huge auditorium, the defective acoustics were very trying. The audience, on the first performance of MacKaye's *Hamlet*, was a splendid one, including many people eminent in art, letters, etc. After the play, Taylor brought some of these behind the scenes to meet the actors. Among them were Thomas Hughes, author of *Tom Brown's School Days*, and Professor Paley, translator of *Æschylus*."

Immediately after the opening performance, my mother wrote in a letter from the Salisbury Hotel, May 4th, to my aunt in Paris:

"Well, it is over—and, thank God, *well* over! Jim did gloriously and has received the highest praise and congratulations from hosts of cultivated and discriminating people. I overheard three gentlemen talking together, as we passed them by, after the performance. One said, pointing Jim out, 'Well, he's the man of the day now!' . . . Mr. Taylor is very happy about the whole matter and declares himself satisfied. I have not room to tell you all the good things said. One old playgoer exclaimed: 'He is far better than Kean.' Another (a sculptor) said: 'I have seen all the *Hamlets* of the last twenty-five years, and that young MacKaye surpasses *all* of them.' Now, of course, the newspapers are to have their say. We shall know *that* verdict soon."

"The London performances of Steele MacKaye's *Hamlet*," wrote the critic of the *New York Sun* (May 19, 1879), "attracted a great deal of attention, and the reviews in the English papers were unmistakably indicative of the originality, force, veracity and finish of the impersonation. Indeed, before that, in America, I had always felt that the young MacKaye could play *Hamlet* with artistic success, because I

* The cast is given in Appendix.

† A *New York* weekly journal, in its issue of May 24, '73.

felt that, in many respects, he *was Hamlet*. His temperament, training, intelligence and scholarly equipment were all in his favor."

With some scattered exceptions (referred to by Charles Reade as "clique malice"), the verdict of the London journals was remarkably favourable—especially unprecedented in its warm reception to an American actor, the first who had ever braved an English verdict in the rôle of *Hamlet*.^{*} Special emphasis was laid on MacKaye's radical departure from old-school traditions.

"A NEW NATURALISM"; VAST AUDIENCES; MEMORIAL TO MACREADY

"The most sanguine expectations," said the London Times (May 5th) "must have been more than satisfied by the crowded state of the theatre, and the vociferous applause that brought to the front Mr. J. S. MacKaye and Mr. Tom Taylor. Never was the progress of a dramatic work watched with more earnest attention than was bestowed by this vast and well-dressed throng, in their manifest delight with Mr. MacKaye's *Hamlet*. We have every reason to believe that this zealous endeavour will be amply rewarded, in its departures from tradition.

"Mr. Taylor has published a special edition of *Hamlet*, with short notes. By a new arrangement, the players—like the old Elizabethan Strollers—actually build up their platform in the presence of the audience, not at the back, but at the side of the stage, opposite the royal party, while *Hamlet* himself, lying at *Ophelia's* feet, is the principal figure in the centre of the background. Thus the faces of the *King* and *Hamlet* are both visible. After the play, the 'Dead March in *Saul* was performed on the organ, in memory of Mr. Macready." †

The *Athenæum* wrote: "Mr. MacKaye presented admirably the courtly side of *Hamlet*. There was throughout an absence of rant in his interpretation, which is of happiest augury."

"*Hamlet*," said the Morning Post, "no longer stalks across the stage with funereal step, nor howls forth with stentorian voice his questionings against the all-ruling powers. The famous monologues are now delivered in easy and natural attitudes, with no use of customary expedients."

And the Illustrated News: "At the remarkable performance at the Crystal Palace, a vast audience has repeatedly sat for more than three hours and a half to behold a play recommended by no rampant puffs, adorned by no meretricious spectacle, attractive only by the force of genius, whose conceptions are reverentially presented by artists. If the theatrical folks but knew it, this is one of the most hopeful signs for the drama of the future."

^{*} Edwin Forrest, MacKaye's American predecessor in England, did not act *Hamlet* there; Edwin Booth gave his first London performance of *Hamlet* in 1880, seven years later than MacKaye's. Henry Irving first acted *Hamlet* at London, in 1874—one year after MacKaye.

† The great English tragic actor who had died April 27th.

THE SPECTATOR: "THE BEST HAMLET OF OUR TIME"; COMPARISON
WITH FECHTER

In a long, leading critique (May 10th) *The Spectator* said:

"Mr. MacKaye's *Hamlet* is by far the best *Hamlet* of our own time. Mr. MacKaye himself has indisputable genius, and acts much better than Mr. Fechter in several critical scenes. Mr. Fechter failed terribly in the great soliloquies, but in these Mr. MacKaye's *Hamlet* excels any the writer has ever seen. His highest points are in the reveries. Nothing can be finer than the dreamy, ghostly voice in which he says to himself:

*'the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourne
No traveller returns, puzzles the will.'*

"His imagination seems to be losing itself in the chill twilight of an unknown world, and to thrill him with a vague shiver of awe. In the soliloquy on the player's passion, Mr. MacKaye made us see that *Hamlet* was evidently hoping the play would make the *King* confess his own guilt, and so perhaps take all the trouble of vengeance off his own shoulders—a new and most expressive point in the character-rendering. He gives, for instance,

*'I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul, that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions,'*

with a sense of relief and unburdening of his heart, as he pronounces the last line, that tells the hope of much more than mere confirmation or disproof of the ghost's story—a final end to his self-imposed responsibilities through the self-accusation of his uncle. And that strikes us as a touch of true genius. Again, in the ghost scene, the faint, vague, inward fashion in which, not addressing *Horatio*—though answering, to himself, *Horatio's* expostulations against following the ghost—he says:

*'Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee—
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?'*

"Here you see that he does not feel the fear, and is arguing himself, not *Horatio*, out of it. Again, when he first bids *Marcellus* hold off his hand, he does it with the absorbed inward air of one not yet roused . . . still arguing with himself, and is only awakened by *Horatio's* seizing the other arm with intention of force. The gradations of feeling here are admirably marked. . . . His intellectual interpretations of obscure points are pointed and telling—like the sudden 'Where's your father?' in the scene between *Hamlet* and *Ophelia*, or the profound scorn which he gives so admirably to *Rosencrantz* and *Gildenstern*—

where he deliberately asks the traitors, 'Have you any further—*trade*—with us?'

"Mr. MacKaye has real genius. His only fault is a too restless action—already mended greatly since the first performance. On the other hand the intense excitement caused in *Hamlet* by the effect on the *King* of the represented murder, and the almost horrid glee with which he compares notes with *Horatio*, is very finely given. . . . The whole drill of the actors is better than any rendering of *Hamlet*, or indeed of Shakespeare, that has been seen since Macready's time at least, and in our opinion in a better school of taste than Macready's. Taking the play as a whole, we doubt whether *Hamlet* has in our generation ever been put so effectively on the stage. Certainly the dreaminess of *Hamlet* himself has never been so well given, and the fitful impulse never better. Nor have the general effects of the greatest play in English ever been placed with so much brilliancy and force before the spectators."

CONGRATULATIONS FROM REGNIER, COLLINS, READE

In a letter from the director of the Théâtre Français, came these warm congratulations:

"La manière remarquable dont vous avez joué votre rôle d'Hamlet, c'est là, pour vous comme pour moi, le principal. Donc, vous avez réussi! et je vous en fais mes très sincères félicitations, bien vive!—Votre affectionné—Régnier."

In another personal letter to MacKaye, Wilkie Collins wrote (May 10th):

"One line to thank you, and to sincerely congratulate you. I thought your greatest successes were just where the part makes the greatest demands on the actor, viz: in the scene with *Ophelia*, in the scene with the *Queen*, and in the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy. I took a great dislike to your theatre, lest it tire your voice. Nevertheless, you were always heard."

And Charles Reade thus, from the Garrick Club, on the same day:

"I have been very ill since I saw you, and unable to use your tickets. But yesterday I went down and paid my money like a man. I saw your *Hamlet* partly from the stalls and partly from the gallery, where I could hear better.

"I have to congratulate you on an excellent performance, full of deep feeling and intelligence which—after the first bitterness of clique malice has subsided—will, I believe, make its way steadily in public favour. If I might venture to give a mere practical hint, it would be that the actor of so immense a **part** should **make** some reserve

of his powers in the earlier scenes. But indeed, I never saw a great actor, Rachel included, who did not err on this line. With the exception of this, which is advice not criticism, I have no hint to give you.

"How I pitied you having to portray swift and tender feeling in reply to those damnable duffers who were about you. Great Lord, in what a tone did that beast, *Horatio*, communicate to a man he loves, a Prince he reveres, that he has seen the ghost of that Prince's father! But I never saw the small parts come active in my life; and frankly, I think so sad a play loses by a grave *Polonius*—though I do feel Taylor's text is the *right* one."

LOOKING TOWARD AMERICA: "THE PERFECTION OF THE ART
OF MY COUNTRY"

Thus, in Shakespeare's England, warmly acclaimed by the leading English critics and dramatists, and ranked with the historic leaders of his profession, as an actor of "indisputable genius" in the greatest of Shakespeare's rôles, MacKaye—at the age of thirty-one—had indeed, as one of the critics wrote, "leapt to the top of the ladder—a master workman, without apparently serving an apprenticeship."

In reality, however, as this memoir has revealed, his apprenticeship had been long, arduous, and pursued with determined vision, since that far day when, as a boy of fourteen, he had cried out to his little cousin Millie, in the apple-orchard—"some day I will be a great actor: I wanted to prove it to myself—and now *I know it!*" *

Now he had proved it—to the world. And now, at this height of personal success in a foreign land, that which he knew with increasing fervour of faith—the *impersonal* goal of his striving—he had confided to his friend, Alger, to whom, in a letter, he communicated these ardent thoughts of his homeland, America, which quickened all his life work:

"I consider my success as an actor of little importance except as a means of empowering me to work effectively for the purification and the perfection of the art of my country. As art is the great impressor of mankind, it is therefore most responsible for the character of its life.

"If we can only establish a profoundly scientific and a loftily religious art in America, we will do more for the practical perfection of God's Image in Humanity than all the dogmatic theologies that were ever invented. With this conviction rooted in my mind, the great ambition of my will is to perform my part faithfully and effectively toward the foundation of such an art in the gloriously promising land of the west."

* Cf. page i, 56.

PART II

Won at Last

"The best age of the Drama lies before—not behind us, and it will be reached when the Moral and Intellectual forces of Society and Science have been brought to bear upon its art, through properly organised and thoroughly administered institutions of dramatic education.—These institutions must necessarily appear as civilisation advances." (p. 269.)

STEELE MACKAYE, 1877.

"The Wallack audience is usually cool; last night it was full of flame. Won at Last is a really brilliant success. There are reasons for believing that this verdict of the public heart will remain the best judgment of the time." (p. 279.)

WILLIAM WINTER, Dec. 11, 1877.

CHAPTER VII

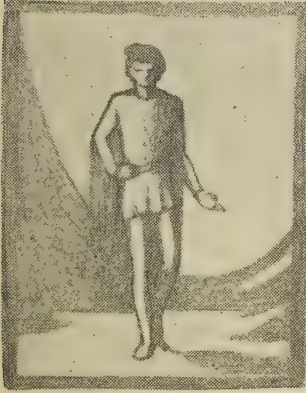
TOURING AND PLAY-APPRENTICESHIP

England and Ireland

(London, "Provinces," Dublin)

1873-'74

HOME IN ENGLAND: "THE LIMES," IN THE VILLA OF JOHN RUSKIN



THERE NOW COMMENCED A YEAR'S sojourn in England of lasting influence upon after years of work in America. It began in full tide of the *Hamlet* success. After its opening the production continued its highly successful run for about three weeks, concluded by a nervous breakdown in my father's health. During the early performances my mother had written (May 9th) in a letter again to "Aunt Sadie," who had remained in their Paris apartment:

"The immense enthusiastic audiences we are having!—such a demand for Jim's photographs * that he was quite forced to have his taken. So yesterday it was done, and we may soon expect Jim to smile or frown on us from every other shop window. . . . Thanks for your loving letter about our darlings, awaiting us. My sweet Willie—how we laughed and cried over his dear little speeches! Hal, too, God bless him! And the blessed little 'ballee' head, Jamie! Oh, my dear, I hope, with a great prayer, that soon we shall have our own little home."

This hope was shortly fulfilled. On the 18th of June the family were happily regathered and settled at Camberwell, Denmark Hill, London, S. E., in a quaint little stone house in Grove Lane, called *The Limes*, within the villa of John Ruskin, their landlord, who lived near by.

HAMLETS NEW AND OLD: THE PASSING OF MACREADY

The sudden and dazzling rise of a new young *Hamlet* from America, in London circles of the theatre and society, took on a somewhat solemn tone of contrast with the passing—in his eightieth year—of the great English tragedian, Macready—*Hamlet* of an

* Two of those *Hamlet* photographs are here included as illustrations.

earlier generation, who was now being publicly mourned and memorialised. We have seen that the première of MacKaye's *Hamlet* was concluded in Macready's memory by the "Dead March" in *Saul*, played on the great organ of the Crystal Palace. At that time, the personal copy of a poem by Tom Taylor (afterwards printed in *Punch*) was given by him to my father. It begins: "W. C. Macready—Born 1792—Died at Cheltenham, April 27, 1873:

*"Is this the Actor's death? When into dark
Sinks the last gleam of a slow-waning light,
Only the bedside watchers miss the spark
That quivered tremulously on the night. . . .*

*"A phantom being: but who dares to say
Our substance than their shadow is more true,
Their lamp-lit night less bright than common day,
Who live, awhile, the life that Shakespeare drew!"*

THE TOM TAYLOR HOUSEHOLD: TENNYSON, BROWNING,
ELLEN TERRY, ETC.

The hospitable fireside of Tom Taylor was an informal meeting place of the most cultivated circles of English society. Taylor himself—as dramatist, scholar, editor, poet, classmate of Tennyson at Trinity College, Oxford, theatrical manager, man of society and affairs—was a personal friend of the foremost leaders, in literature, art and government, of his time in England. His wife (née Laura Wilson Barker) was a gifted composer, who helped to make their home a centre of music as well as of art and letters. In her youth she had known Wordsworth well, had studied the violin with Paganini and had played duets with Mendelssohn in her home.

In Mrs. Taylor's old age, my wife and I visited her, in 1900, at Amersham, Buckinghamshire, where she had recently returned from conducting—on her eightieth birthday—a programme of her own orchestral compositions at the Birmingham Musical Festival. In the serenity of candlelight, seated at the piano in great lace cap and gown of black velvet, she played and sang us her inimitable "Songs of Innocence" to Blake's words—and many other felicitous songs for words of Tennyson, Rossetti and other poet friends, for whom personally she had composed them. Then, over teacups or late supper (after a day watching the hounds afield for several miles) she recalled for us days of the 'Seventies, in Lavender Sweep, Clapham Common, when my father and mother were intimates in the Taylor household.

Beginning with celebrities of a still earlier era—Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, Thomas and Jane Carlyle, Thackeray and Dickens, Darwin, Spencer, Huxley—her memories conjured back George Eliot, John Ruskin, the Brownings, Arnold and Meredith, Swinburne and Morris—laureates, actresses, premiers and duchesses—all, not as “notables” but as familiar friends and neighbours, still intimate in her affectionate remembrance and humorous anecdote. Herself an excellent violinist, she was the happy owner of a superb Stradivarius violin—concerning whose seductive charms she told the diverting tale of an “elopement.”

This “Strad” of hers had long been worshipped afar, with passionately covetous eyes, by her friend, the great Hungarian violinist, Joseph Joachim. One evening, at one of her soirées, Joachim—to whom she had just loaned it for the occasion—was conjuring divine tunes from the delicate instrument, when suddenly an alarm of fire scattered guests, *maestro* and all in momentary panic.

The alarm over and allayed, the gracious Mrs. Taylor began to regather her guests, amongst whom now neither Joachim nor lovely Strad was anywhere to be found! For an instant her heart fluttered. Then, with lightning discernment, unobtrusively she despatched servants in quick search, by whom the happy pair were overtaken, well outside the driveway of Lavender Sweep, and halted—on their passionate pilgrimage to Gretna Green! So heart-string entwined with catgut, Joachim returned to his hostess’ soirée, surrendering there the lovely creature of his elopment, with one last, parting strain of “*O, du, meine Seele!*” From such musical memories old Mrs. Taylor would turn then to others literary:

“It was Tennyson brought me this poem of his, one March morning, and asked me to set it for him, and afterwards we sang it together. He had a puzzly voice, better to read his own poems than to sing them. He’d stick his great feet up by the coals and smoke his pipe with Tom. And Mr. Browning? Oh, yes, he was with us often, but more usually at parties. He was greatly devoted to the ‘inner man,’ you know: funny little Mr. Browning—so fond of wining and dining and the ladies!”

So she would chat on in smiling reminiscence.

Ellen Terry, Muse of perennial youth—herself glancing back through the years in reminiscence—wrote for me, in my home guest-book (1915), first quoting there Herrick’s *Daffodils*, which Mrs. Taylor used to sing, at Amersham, to her own music:

“‘Rosemary for remembrance!’ And do you remember, dear Percy, Laura Wilson Barker Taylor, and Lucy, and Wycliffe, and the wee

village, and Mrs. Tom's sweet music?—and her cheeriness, and gentleness, and the *fieryness* of her too? Put me with these thoughts some times!—Your affectionate friend, Ellen Terry."

In her autobiography, also, *The Story of My Life*, Ellen Terry has thus described the home of Tom Taylor, who introduced her to her first husband, Watts, the famous painter:

"At the Taylor's house, the friends, the arts, the refinements had an enormous influence on me. As I grew up, in many ways Tom Taylor was more of a father to me than my own teasing, insouciant Irish father. It was not Nelly alone whom Tom Taylor fathered. He adopted the whole family. . . . At Lavender Sweep, with the horse-chestnut blossoms strewing the drive and making it look like a tessellated pavement, all of us were always welcome. Lavender Sweep was a sort of house of call for every one of note. Mazzini stayed there some time, and Steele MacKaye, who played Tom Taylor's version of *Hamlet*, with Polly as *Ophelia*.' . . . When Tom Taylor died, I lost a friend the like of whom I never had again."

With this charming household of the Taylors and their children, Wycliffe and Lucy, the MacKays and their children—in the spring of '73—were soon on terms of affectionate intimacy; and here my father and mother formed new friendships with other interesting contemporaries.

"THE PRINCE OF DENMARK HILL"; WM. ALLINGHAM, LORD HOUGHTON

Among these was the Irish poet, William Allingham,* who wrote for little Lucy Taylor his then widely read child-poem, "*Good Night and Good Morning*." Mrs. Allingham—a cousin of our American wit and artist, Oliver Herford—was a gifted painter and illustrator:

"The Allinghams have been here to-day," wrote Tom Taylor to Ellen Terry, from Lavender Sweep. "They saw you twice as *Portia*, and were charmed. Mrs. Allingham wants to paint you."

There was also Lord Houghton (Richard Monckton Milnes), then over sixty, poet and litterateur, whom Edmond Gosse has called "a foremost figure in the literary and political society of the day." Some years earlier he had become the enthusiastic patron of young Swinburne, whose *Atalanta* he had made the literary sensation of the time. Interested in youth and in genius at its

* In 1880 Allingham submitted a historical play of his, *Ashby Manor*, to my father for production at the Madison Square Theatre, New York. Cf. page i, 350.

threshold, Lord Houghton took a warm liking to my father and entertained him hospitably among distinguished friends.

"On their first meeting at a dinner party given by the Taylors (wrote my mother), Lord Houghton took the greatest fancy to him, and said to Mrs. Taylor: 'Would you mind now turning the places round a little, so as to let young *Hamlet* sit next to me?' So the young 'Prince of Denmark Hill' sat next to Lord Houghton, who told him a great deal about the old French actors, and actresses, at the Théâtre Français."

Apropos of such French actors, there came from Paris to my father, at the time, this note from his (and their) old French "maître," director of the Théâtre Français:

"J'ai été bien touché de votre lettre, mon cher ami, et les bonnes nouvelles qu'elle me donne me rendent forte heureux. Vous voilà, comme nous disons, *le pied dans l'étrice*. Restez maintenant sur votre cheval, affirmez-vous-y. Faite fortune, vous êtes d'étoffe à en arriver là. . . . Je vous remercie de vos deux photographies; je les trouve fort belles et fort ressemblantes; elles seront pour moi un bon souvenir des bonnes heures que nous avons passés ensemble. . . . Mille bons souhaits, mon cher ami, pour vous et les vôtres, et mille amitiés de votre bien dévoué et affectionné.—*Régnier*."

"On May 10th," writes Frank Archer in his *Actor's Notebook*, "the MacKays gave a pleasant little dinner to the actors in *Hamlet*, at the Salisbury Hotel, near Fleet Street. I have the most pleasant memories of MacKaye, and also of his wife and his father."

SEVERE ILLNESS; "POOR DICKENS' DOCTOR"; *HAMLET* CLOSES

Fortune was indeed smiling with peculiar graciousness upon the much-sought-after young *Hamlet*, when an acute recurrence of nervous exhaustion brought to an end, temporarily, his acting and his interesting round of social engagements.

"I only heard last night that you were ill," came a note to him (May 27th) from Wilkie Collins. "Pray let us consider Friday as deferred, and pray accept my heartiest wishes for your recovery. I hope to be able to call and inquire about you in a few days. . . . If you require any special medical advice (which I earnestly hope may not be the case), *my* doctor—once poor Charles Dickens' doctor also—is the man. If you can write a line, or dictate a line, let me hear how you are.—Yours ever, W. C."

With, or without, this intensively literary doctor, MacKaye was ere long up and about again, and dining with the doctor himself, as this further entry of Frank Archer, in his "Notebooks," records:

"In early June of '73, I lunched with Wilkie Collins at 90 Gloucester Place, Portman Square. There were present, also, Squire Bancroft, John Hare, Steele MacKaye, Frank C. Beard—Dickens' friend and doctor—and Charles Reade, the novelist. There was much pleasant conversation. Speaking of Régnier, Wilkie Collins exclaimed: 'How splendid he was in *La Joie Fait Peur*! He must have helped Madame de Girardin greatly with that little play.'

"Another subject—Charles Dickens—had a special interest. The impression of Dr. Beard distinctly was, that Dickens' public readings hastened his end. So earnest was he on the subject, that he induced most of us to go round to his house in Welbeck Street, in order to see his professional journal, giving particulars of the state of Dickens' pulse, before, during and after his public readings."

In June, young MacKaye was busy with Tom Taylor—preparing to take advantage of his London success by a tour of the "provinces" in *Hamlet*, as well as in a new play by Taylor, *Arkwright's Wife*, in which MacKaye had anonymously collaborated as dramatist. In this play now, as actor, he was cast for the part of an old inventor, *Peter Hayes*—a Lancashire dialect-rôle.

PREPARING TO TOUR THE PROVINCES: "A BOOK OF MYSTERIES"

Once more he was constantly engaged in professional meetings, of much practical value for his future career in the theatre. Notes flew back and forth between "Lavender Sweep" and "The Limes."

"Will you dine with me on Thursday at the Garrick, at 7, to meet Harris, the Dublin manager—and Flockton * ?—*T. T.*

"Instead of coming out to Lavender Sweep, we will go together to the Garrick, to meet Charles Calvert, the Manchester manager—the most competent and high-reaching English manager I know. . . . Always yrs., *Tom Taylor.*"

On one of these busy days, Tom Taylor was hurrying with my father and mother along a crowded London thoroughfare, when he stopped abruptly, exclaiming, "I've found her! She's just the one for us!"

They had been discussing changes in the cast for the tour. At the première, *Ophelia* had been played by a Miss Carlysle, and Taylor was now searching his mind for a better actress to fill that exacting part.

"Found whom? And where?" asked my father.

"*Ophelia*! And I'll tell you where: I've found her in a book of *Mys-teries.*"

* Flockton was then chosen to act *Polonius*, on tour.

"Mysteries?"

"Precisely: Miss—Terrys! A mysterious book of genius: The Art of the Theatre, complete in three parts—Kate, Ellen and Marion! Kate—we can't have at all; Ellen—we can't have, yet; but Marion—we must have *now*! She's the only available match for your *Hamlet*, MacKaye. And I think I can engage her."

He did; and accordingly Miss Marion Terry was engaged to play *Ophelia* to my father's *Hamlet* for the tour of the Provinces.

PLACING A "TYPE-WRITER" NEW ROLES: LANCASHIRE DIALECT

One day on Fleet Street he encountered an American friend, Emmett Densmore, who—the year before—had aided him in getting capital for the St. James Theatre, New York. Densmore was now in London, himself looking for capital to introduce on the market a new machine called "the type-writer." For this, MacKaye—always fascinated by new inventions and eager to requite his friend's former good offices—sought out and found for him the needed backing, as this note (17th June) from Wilkie Collins intimates:

"Dear MacKaye—Forgive me for not writing sooner to thank you for your kind letter. I placed the specimen of the 'type-writer' at once in the hands of a friend. You have no doubt heard that this very clever invention is now to be brought before the public notice—with 'capital' to back it. It will, I hope, be a great success.

"I am going to Paris to-morrow to settle about the French translation of my (dramatic) *New Magdalen* with our excellent friend, Régnier. If you have any message to him—or anything to be sent—let me hear before 12 o'clock (noon) to-morrow. In a week I shall, I trust, be back again—and then we must meet. With kindest regards to Mrs. MacKaye, yours—W. C."

The tour was now imminent. On June 10th, MacKaye had written to Alger in Boston:

"I seem to be in such demand here in England that I cannot now tell when I shall return to America. My time is already filled up until next Christmas, and I have only begun to accept these so-called 'starring' engagements. I start in about three weeks, through the principal cities of England, Ireland and Scotland. I am very busy preparing in new parts. Of course, *Hamlet* will be my leading rôle."

During the last of June he was sitting for his portrait, in the rôles of *Hamlet* and *Peter Hayes*, to the English artist, Fleuss,* a distinguished friend of Tom Taylor and a Fellow of the Royal Academy. At about this time Charles Reade wrote to my mother:

* The drawing by N. T. Fleuss of MacKaye as *Hamlet* is reproduced as the frontispiece of this volume.

"Alas, dear Mrs. MacKaye, we are doomed not to meet at The Limes. I am particularly engaged to-morrow. I must hope to fall in with you both in Lancashire,"

Lancashire was in the route of the tour, and there soon my father was acting in the new play, *Arkwright's Wife*—a story of Lancashire industry, before audiences who spoke the same dialect which he was using on the stage, as the old inventor, *Peter Hayes*—a rôle concerned with that very "spinning-jenny," which—aptly to this memoir—was the foundation of his own great-grandfather's (William Kay's) cotton-spinning industry on the Scotch border. Touches of this Lancashire dialect, which he now had the opportunity of observing in local speech, he used later in his *Hazel Kirke*.

LEEDS: PETER HAYES IN *ARKWRIGHT'S WIFE*: LIFE ON TOUR

On Saturday, July 5th, he started on his tour, which opened on the following Monday, with *Arkwright's Wife*, at the Theatre Royal, in Leeds, where on July 6th he wrote to my mother at The Limes, Denmark Hill:

"We arrived safely yesterday—a rehearsal last night. The theatre is a miserable, dirty little box, but we all regard our performances as rehearsals to our appearance at Manchester. . . . In regard to *Aud Peter Hayes*, I have not been permitted to have an idea of my own; consequently, I shall not show what I can do with the rôle until I escape the gaze of Mr. Taylor. . . . I am now at a hotel, but go into cheap lodgings to-morrow. Mr. Ferrand, St. Maur and myself are to lodge and mess together."

On the opening and closing of that week, two other letters express contrasted moods:

(Leeds, July 9th): "Dear Molly—We made our début Monday night under the most disheartening circumstances: the most wretched, dirty little stage . . . filthiest appointments . . . worst management I ever saw—before a very small house. However, we woke them up. I was called three times, and applause at all my exits, to which I gave considerable effect, yet I am very much dissatisfied with my acting of the part. Mr. T. insists upon my acting it so as to repel all sympathy of the audience. I am forced to make him a bitter, malignant, disagreeable, repulsive old man, without one redeeming feature. The result is that I heartily hate the part. . . . I am very happy with our lads—all gentlemen and good-hearted fellows—exceedingly kind to me. Mrs. Kelly* is a little angel and realises all your impressions of

* Two years later (Dec. 20, '75), Henry Ferrand (*Horatio* on this tour) wrote from London to MacKaye in New York: "Of our old friends on the *Hamlet* tour, I suppose you have heard of the death of Mrs. Kelly, our charming Nancy Hyde in *Arkwright's Wife*. Poor Kelly is fearfully grieved." Some years later this Charles Kelly (who acted the *King* to my father's *Hamlet*) became the second husband of Ellen Terry.

her. Write her a little note . . . how much I like her and her big-hearted husband. . . . An awfully tiresome week, rehearsing all day, acting all night. I am completely fagged out. Next week I shall be studying and rehearsing *Awaking*. Can you not come to Manchester, with Willie, while I am there? . . . If not then, I shall not see you for a long time, as we start immediately for Dublin.

"Here is a first-night notice: '*As Peter Hayes, Steele MacKaye displayed good quality in a thankless part, playing a villain so subtle, so repulsive, so calculating, that in some respects it may be considered the hit of the evening. At moments Mr. MacKaye overstepped the bounds, but at others his acting was a picture.*'"

"(Leeds: Sunday, July 13th): I played *Hamlet* last night to a crowded house—loudly applauded throughout, vociferously called after every act. I never played it so well, and never with such ease. I was as fresh when it was over as when I began—so much for playing in a *theatre*, instead of in such a *barn* as the Crystal Palace! . . . To-morrow we start for Manchester, where I open at the Theatre Royal in *Peter Hayes*; but I shall urge Mr. Taylor to hurry up *Silas Marner* for me. After Mr. Taylor left, I acted *Hayes* in my own way with three times as much effect, and the whole company agreed that my rendering was a great improvement on Taylor's. . . . Hasbury, my dresser, has proved a perfectly worthless cuss—and I believe is a thief as well—for two pounds were stolen out of my pocketbook last night. Apropos, my first salary was paid me yesterday, and I wish to carefully preserve a ten-pound note I received on that occasion. When you come down to Manchester, you can help me dress until I can get a new dresser. I shall dismiss Hasbury. We must have the Fleuss pictures * in Manchester. . . . I have been living and dressing with Mr. Ferrand, Mr. St. Maur, and Mr. Anstruther, very cheaply and cheerfully. Fine apartments have already been engaged for us in Manchester, where you can join us with perfect propriety and sure of a welcome from the dear boys. The room for you and me will cost ten shillings a week. My living expenses are two pounds, weekly. I shall be rich on this tour with my five pounds and will bring home a little bank account. I have saved two pounds this week—but *alas, they were stolen!*"

MANCHESTER: SALARY AND "INDEPENDENCE": THE ELDER TERRYS

On Monday, July 14th, he began a two-weeks' run of repertory in Manchester at the Theatre Royal, opening in *Arkwright's Wife*, which was well received.

"The first act," wrote the Manchester Examiner and Times, "gives opportunity for some fine acting, the character of *Peter Hayes*, the old inventor, being well drawn and well sustained throughout. Mr. MacKaye portrays the old man to perfection." And the Manchester

* Crayon portraits (by the English artist, Fleuss, F.R.A.) of J. S. M., as *Hamlet* and *Peter Hayes*.

Guardian: "As *Peter Hayes*, Mr. J. Steele MacKaye struggles with energy and care to make the most of a peculiarly repellent part."

Shortly after the opening, my father wrote from Manchester to my mother, who—at The Limes—was caring for her brother James Medbery, in his last illness, Medbery (with his wife, "Marie"), having just arrived there from a journey on the Continent in search of his health:

(July 15): "I am very glad to hear of the safe arrival of dear Jim and Marie. If a heartfelt of anxious love could cure any one, my heart would soon make a well man of our darling brother. I shall see the dear boy next Sunday, when I go to London to bring you here. . . . I am sorry to realise how our little stock of money has melted. However, I surely expect to send you 11 pounds a week. Gradually I am learning how to live in the cheapest manner. When I tell you *I have not had a cab once* since I left London, you can see how economical I am getting! . . . *Arkwright's Wife* was played last night to a pleased but a very dull audience. There was a call for no one, though I got considerable applause."

(July 17th): ". . . How sweet it is to feel, each day, that I have earned something for others as well as myself! To realise that I am not altogether worthless is a blessed thing. And I think I am steadily improving, each day more successful than I had a right to hope. *Peter Hayes* is now recognised to be the great part of the piece, although he has comparatively little to say and is the unsympathetic part of the play. . . . If I can only keep my health, I see no interruption to our present condition of honest independence. May we prove worthy of such wondrous happiness! And you, sweet woman and best friend—may angels love and wisdom guard you, every hour! . . . I am happy every time I think of dear, sweet Jim's being with you. Oh, Mary! How grateful I am that we can begin to be of some use to our fellow creatures! Such bliss is cheap at any price. How easy it is to bear fatigue, irritations and disappointment, when at least they confer the power to guard and cherish those we love.

"All goes well here. My *Hamlet* was such a success at Leeds that we are going to play it here next week. I shall get to our little home by the first train from London Sunday morning. We will come back here by the first train Monday. . . . Have you heard from father lately? Does he say anything about going to Ireland to see me in Dublin? A week from next Monday we open there, you know. . . . Au revoir, dear heart! With endless yearning for my boys, always thine own—J. S. M."

My mother returned with him to Manchester for a week, in a reminiscence of which she has written:


"At Manchester we lived in the same lodgings with the Terrys, Miss Marion and her parents. Her father and mother were quiet and very aristocratic in their ways. Mrs. Terry had an old-fashioned

dignity like that of the elder Mrs. John Drew. She used very beautiful diction and was very conservative. Her daughter Kate had married a rich merchant; and Mrs. Terry would not allow Marion, who was then in her teens, to go to a photographer without her married sister going with her as chaperone."

HAMLET AGAIN: "SUBTLE BEAUTY AND GRANDEUR"; ELIZABETHAN STAGE; "GENUINE SUCCESS—DARING AND GIFTED": MARION TERRY, AS OPHELIA

Hamlet opened, the second week, and received in the weekly journal, *The Critic* (July 26th), a long and favourable review, emphasising the then "startling" new methods of naturalness in acting and production, as well as the revival, for the first time, of the Elizabethan stage technique, in the play within the play: pioneering innovations in Shakespearean production, which are supposed to-day to have had a much more recent origin.

"The actors have been taught to live and move as human creatures, and to cast aside all stage conventionality and tradition of the 'palmy days.' The result, at first, is calculated to astonish the beholder, being the antithesis of what playgoers have been accustomed to witness. The keynote of the whole production is 'realism'; and one becomes charmed, almost fascinated, by the subtle beauty of light and shade, and awed by the majestic grandeur of many passages, all thoroughly in harmony with the known conditions of human existence.



THEATRE ROYAL

LAST NIGHT

TOM TAYLOR'S

SELECT LONDON COMPANY,

MR. J. STEELE MACRAE, MISS HELEN BARRY.

On Saturday, July 26, 1873,

HAMLET

AS PERFORMED BY THE CHIEFS OF THE PALACE, LONDON.

Hamlet	MR. CHARLES WALLIS
Clara	MR. HENRY ST. JOHN
Polonius	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Horatio	MR. FREDERICK STANTON
Laertes	MR. FREDERICK STANTON
Gertrude	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Ophelia	MISS HELEN BARRY
Francisco	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Reynolds	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
First Player	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Second Player	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Third Player	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Fourth Player	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Fifth Player	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Sixth Player	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Seventh Player	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Eighth Player	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Ninth Player	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE
Tenth Player	MR. J. STEELE MACRAE

Lower Circle 3s. 6d., Upper Circle 2s. 6d., Gallery 1s. 6d.

Doors open at Seven o'clock; commence at Half-past.

NOTE: Extra Doors under the Portico in the Strand to the Upper Circle and Pit; also in South Street to the Gallery, will be opened on the evening of this night at 6 o'clock.

Prices of Admission: Upper Circle, 2s. 6d.; Pit, 1s. 6d.; Gallery, 1s.

ON MONDAY NEXT.

MR. BUCKSTONE

HAYMARKET COMPANY

THE WICKED WORLD,

WITH A NEW SCENE, AT THE THEATRE ROYAL, LONDON.

PRICES OF ADMISSION: Upper Circle, 2s. 6d.; Pit, 1s. 6d.; Gallery, 1s.

"The first scene, *Elsinore*, is made much of: instead of a front scene we have a 'set,' occupying a large portion of the stage. Unfortunately, on Monday evening, the water ripple caught fire, and a dangerous blaze ensued, which so alarmed the moon that she disappeared altogether. The peregrinations of the *Ghost* were unattended by the lime light. . . . In the play scene, a very artistic, picturesque group is realised. The players act on the raised platform, as in the primitive

days of the drama. . . . The dead body of *Ophelia* is borne to burial on a bier by nuns, and the play wound up by the beautiful speech of *Horatio*:

*'Now cracks a noble heart. Good-night, sweet Prince:
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!'* *

"There are many other interesting and original novelties introduced. . . .

"Mr. MacKaye's impersonation of *Hamlet*—the most difficult, subtle and mysterious character ever imagined—we pronounce a genuine success, a talented and gifted performance. He has plunged, as it were, *in medias res*, without warning, without any trumpeting forth of alleged genius, but imbued undoubtedly with a new theory which takes his audience by surprise. All praise is due to an actor who, by his earnest and enthusiastic efforts *thus fearlessly stems the tide of conventionality*. . . . Though as a whole not perfect, yet portions of his impersonation are all that could be desired. The excitement, and upsetting of brain equilibrium are finely realised and lead up forcibly to the expression of *Horatio*:

'These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.'

"All the soliloquies were delivered with a telling and thorough appreciation of the intensity of their meaning; the scene with *Ophelia* was well rendered; and the closet scene was enacted with all the earnestness and power demanded by the occasion—to our thinking, a most artistic, highly intelligent and finished performance. . . . We have never seen a *Polonius* equal to Mr. Flockton's. Instead of the dribbling old imbecile we usually see, we have presented to us a gentlemanly old courtier, still fussy and troublesome, but never vulgar or ridiculous.

"The name of Terry always had a charm for Manchester playgoers, and when the youngest of the trio entered as *Ophelia* on Monday evening, she was warmly received. Miss Marion Terry is very young and new to her work, and consequently nervous in controlling her sweet, young voice. But she is earnest, and her impersonation of *Ophelia* was youthful, ladylike and pleasing, and in the two mad scenes had the ring of true genius inherent in the family. Upon each exit she was warmly applauded. . . . Miss Helen Barry † acted the *Queen Mother* with power and intelligence, and looked—well, to say the least—beautiful.

"In conclusion, we commend this *Hamlet* to all Shakespearean students. It is a bold and daring move in the right direction, leading to that happy consummation when histrionic art shall be a true exposition of the subtleties of human character, and when human nature shall be presented shorn of conventionality and theatrical mannerism."

DUBLIN, IRELAND; ILLNESS; RETURN TO LONDON

During the week of July 28th my father acted *Hamlet* and *Peter Hayes* at the Theatre Royal, in Dublin, Ireland.

* Cf. page ii, 462.

† Described as "a stately damozel of remarkable beauty," Helen Barry had made her début in *Basil and Bijou*, August 29, 1872, at Covent Garden, London.

Nothing could have been more encouraging than the reception given to him as an actor in Great Britain; but once more ill-health intervened. Again, as formerly in *Monaldi*, on several nights he fainted before the end of the performance. In consequence, soon after Dublin, he was obliged definitely to abandon his acting tour and return to London—a momentous decision which led to an intensive apprenticeship in playwriting.

"After my return to London," he said in an interview (Dec., 1879), "my health was so bad that I gave up all hope of achieving laurels as an actor. Tom Taylor and I were warm personal friends, and one of our many conversations led to our association as playwrights. We collaborated a number of plays, four or five of which have never seen the light."

PLAY-COLLABORATIONS, READE AND TAYLOR; DEATH OF
JAMES MEDBERY

He was also collaborating, anonymously, with Charles Reade, who wrote to him (from 2 Albert Terrace, Kingsbridge, Aug. 24th, '73) a note in reference to casting a collaboration of theirs, called *Jealousy*, at a Liverpool opening:

"Dear MacKaye: I have seen Mr. Sillam. He is a very nice, intelligent young man, but seems to me to have hardly weight for *James Anesley*. I have not, however, seen anything I do like; and he says he can take a reading; so I have not decided *against* him. . . . Need I say I would be delighted to see you at Liverpool. Unfortunately I have no inducement to draw you down. For, to be frank, I go into this thing in the spirit of an embittered author, whose works are kept off the London stage by cabals."

A week later, in the midst of MacKaye's own ill health, the death of his dear chum and brother-in-law, James Medbery, came as a depressing blow. From Mentone, after a brief trip to Ovonne, Spain, in the Pyrenees, Medbery had come to England, to visit his kindred at The Limes, where on August 31st, '73, he gave up his buoyant fight for life, leaving behind him a tradition of gay-hearted and high-mettled courage.

"I have seen many young men," wrote John Russell Young*, "come up to try the hazards of literary life, but I have never seen one who gave such rich promise of a name of permanence and power as James K. Medbery. Had he lived, America would have had a Robert Louis Stevenson."

"We have grieved with you in your great sorrow," wrote Tom

* Editor of N. Y. Tribune, Ambassador to China, Librarian of Congress, etc.

Taylor, "that you have lost a brother who had, in a rare degree, the qualities that command respect and love. . . . I have kept the third act of *Clancarty* by me, in the intention of rewriting it, but you will understand the difficulty of doing this, after once completing it on the original lines. I confess to you that I do not feel satisfied with it as it now stands."

This reference to *Clancarty* alludes to another anonymous collaboration of MacKaye, soon afterward produced under Tom Taylor's authorship.

PARIS; GUSTAVE DELSARTE; DISAPPOINTMENT IN DELSARTE MSS.

On September 24th, from The Limes, my father wrote to Alger at Boston, in regard to Alger's desire for him to return to America, to teach there:

"My dear friend—As to your plan of having Gustave Delsarte join you and Mr. Monroe in Boston, you may be assured that I will do my best to realise your wishes. I expect to go to Paris next week, and I will interview him personally on the subject. I have grave fears, however, regarding his pluck. He is terribly lacking in ambition and enterprise and, I think, rather too wedded to his own ease. However, I will let you know the result without delay. . . . What peace and joy to feel that I had the right to go to you and begin work which would give a value to my life that nothing else can! But I cannot. I must earn money enough for my family to be independent and pay my debts. This will take time; my health is poor. The hard work of the spring and these hot summer months, travelling and acting very trying parts, has broken me down. I have been obliged to stop acting and rest. . . . I am here in London too late to make arrangements in America, or even in London, for the coming winter. I don't know what I am to do, or where I shall go. My provincial tour, though very successful from an artistic point of view, has been a fatal thing for me otherwise, as it tried my health severely and kept me out of London so long, as to render impossible any opening here for the winter."

A NEW HOME, "THE BOX": LITERARY LIFE AND LOP-EARED RABBITS

Early in October, the family moved from "The Limes" to another little stone house of John Ruskin's close by, at No. 7 Love Walk, Denmark Hill, Camberwell; from which in those days there was a beautiful view of London city—St. Paul's and the Parliament buildings, paintably lovely in the distance. The surrounding Camberwell region was rich in literary associations. Robert Browning was born at Camberwell Grove. Coventry Patmore wooed his wife in Camberwell Parish. John Ruskin, born in Hunter Street, Bloomsbury, moved to Home Hill and from there to Denmark Hill.

Here my father christened his new little home "The Box," and took much joy in furnishing it with my mother. (See photograph in Appendix.) In an old curiosity shop they found an ancient, tall, square-topped clock, telling the moons and week-days as well as hours—for many years afterward, in America, the heart of the family circle, where stockings were hung at Christmas and the midnight strokes of the new years rang out, to the rim-tipping of lifted glasses and the toasting of all dear ones in remembrance.

At "The Box," (my mother has told me) there stood on this clock a tall silent dark-brown bird; on the mantel another small brass clock, of the French Empire period, with graceful candelabra—a gift of the Colonel. Near by my father wrote at an exquisite old writing-desk. One Mrs. Deffern ("Detty"), a typically imperturbable English housekeeper, "kept the keys," served tea—but "Oh, Madam, never a tart on a round platter! That were impossible!"—and engaged the cooks—one of whom, on being discharged for too deep an addiction to old stout—hurled this parting critique: "You *Hamericans*!—everybody knows you's crazy; for one mornin' you 'as bacon and *heggs* for breakfast, and next mornin' you 'as somethin' *helse*!"

RADICAL LEADERS: CHAS. BRADLAW, JOS. CHAMBERLAIN,
ANNIE BESANT

Here, their next door neighbour, old Dr. Reynolds, would drop in with his kindly daughter, Miss Hero, for tea with literary neighbours and artist friends. And here a new family of lop-eared rabbits succeeded, as pets, to those which the Communist concierge had so rabidly devoured in Paris. Yet Communist echoes were not lacking in London during that fall and winter, when vast crowds of working people broke down the palings of Hyde Park and gathered to hear fiery speeches on popular rights delivered by Charles Bradlaw, the famous secular and atheistic leader.

At this time, Mrs. Annie Besant (née Anna Wood, the daughter of an English vicar) was beginning in London her sociological crusades; and with her, Bradlaw, "the British Bob Ingersoll," a man of enormous size and magnetic power, entered into crusading partnership. In this radical group was young Joseph Chamberlain, ten years the junior of Bradlaw.

As, the year before in New York, the radical leader, John Swinton, had shown keen enthusiasm for MacKaye, the æsthetic *Monaldi*, so now in London Charles Bradlaw was attracted by

the personal magnetism of MacKaye, the young *Hamlet*, who was "fearlessly stemming the tide of conventionality in the theatre's art" by his new naturalism and radical ideas in æsthetic philosophy. At Bradlaw's invitation, my father and mother attended several of the great labor leader's meetings; but though my father was deeply stirred by the human justice of the labour cause, he was as deeply repelled and depressed by the agnostic pessimism and materialistic denial of the mystic and heroic in man, which characterised such exponents of the cause as Bradlaw himself. In consequence their friendly relationship never attained to intimacy.

ORLANDO TO THE ROSALIND OF HELEN FAUCIT

That autumn, for a single performance, my father returned to the Shakespearean stage, at the personal request of Lady Martin, Helen Faucit,* the famous English actress, then retired. Being asked to give a benefit for the Royal General Theatrical Fund, in *As You Like It*, she replied: "Yes, I will act again as *Rosalind*, if I can get that young American *Hamlet* to act *Orlando* with me." Accordingly a more formal invitation ensued,† with these two notes from the Royal Fund's Secretary to "J. Steele MacKaye, Esq.":

"(29 Wellington St., Strand; Nov. 26, 1873):

"Many thanks from the Directors for your kind assent. Directly the cast is complete and the rehearsals arranged, I will write you. Miss Faucit said to me in conversation that perhaps you would call at her house to rehearse the principal scenes with her."

"(Royalty Theatre, Dean St., Soho, Dec. 10th):

"I have seen Miss Helen Faucit, who will be obliged if you will go through your scenes with her at her house, 31 Onslow Square, on Saturday next, at half-past two. Will you kindly write me by return if this will be convenient to you, directing as above?"

In this benefit, which was performed at the Haymarket Theatre with great social and artistic éclat on December 20th, W. Rignold played the *Banished Duke*, George Vincent—*Duke Frederick*, J. Steele MacKaye—*Orlando*, Charles Wyndham—*Le Beau*.

Four nights earlier, these few words, written on a card, carry by their signature token of a romantic friendship in the life of Charles Reade:

* Of Helen Faucit's acting Lester Wallack wrote (in his *Memories of Fifty Years*, 1889): "She was one of the most sympathetic actresses who ever walked the English stage. In tragedy, she combined a rare degree of power with perfect pathos. In comedy, her chief parts were *Beatrice* and *Rosalind*."

† Included in Appendix.



J. STEELE MACKAYS



TOM TAYLOR



W. G. WILLS



CHARLES READE

THE YOUNG DRAMATIST AND HIS ENGLISH COLLABORATORS
London, 1873—1874 (index).



JAMES STEELE MACKAYE AS *Orlando*

ROLES IN ENGLAND: SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY AND LANCASHIRE MELODRAMA

In 1873, at London, MacKaye acted Orlando to the Rosalind of Helen Faucit; on tour in the Provinces and in Dublin, Ireland, he acted the old character part of Peter Hayes in "Arkwright's Wife," his collaboration with Tom Taylor. On the same tour he acted Hamlet (pages 4, 218; 211).



HELEN FAUCIT (*Lady Martin*)



JAMES STEELE MACKAYE AS *Peter Hayes*

"Queen's Theatre

"Please admit this party to a private box (a good one).

Laura Seymour.

Nov. 22."

On the back of this card is this comment, written by my mother, who, with my father, was one of "this party," and knew the signer well:

"Laura Seymour, cousin and life-long friend of Charles Reade, was also his housekeeper for many years. She had been a well-known actress, and it was largely through her influence that Charles Reade's attention was devoted to playwriting. She was generally his business manager in his theatrical ventures. *The order is for a box to see Mrs. John Wood in Charles Reade's play, The Wandering Heir**."

On the death of his friend, some years later, Charles Reade had this inscription placed over her grave: "*Here lies the great heart of Laura Seymour.*" †

At home, and in a circle of such artist friends, literary and theatrical, my father's days passed amid happy interests, tempered by financial anxieties.

W. G. WILLS; TEMPLE CLUB ELECTION; TOM TAYLOR CONTRACT

Meantime his playwriting apprenticeship, in collaboration with three of the then leading dramatists of England, was in active progress. Besides *Jealousy*, with Charles Reade, and a sheaf of plays with Tom Taylor, he was collaborating plots and plays with W. G. Wills, whose *Eugene Aram* had recently been produced by Henry Irving. Of this dramatist, Ellen Terry—who acted the title-rôle in his play, *Olivia*—has written in her Life-Story:

"Wills was Irish all over—the strangest mixture of the aristocrat and the sloven. He could eat a large, raw onion every night like a peasant, yet his ideas were magnificent and instinct with refinement. A true Bohemian in money matters, he made a great deal out of his plays—and never had a farthing to bless himself with! In the theatre, he was charming."

On December 9, '73, he wrote to my father from the Arundel Club:

"My dear MacKaye—I have a splendid plot. Now when will you come and hear it? It is advanced enough now, I think, for you to decide. Kindest regards to Mrs. MacKaye. Yours most faithfully—*W. G. Wills.*"

* It was in *The Wandering Heir* that Ellen Terry returned to the stage for the first time after her marriage with Watts.

† Cf. page i, 359 and i, 219.

On January 6, '74, the Temple Club sent word that Mr. J. Steele MacKaye was "unanimously elected a member of this club on the 5th inst." There, on January 24th, a document signed by Tom Taylor (certifying to a list of several plays collaborated with MacKaye) and a contract between Taylor and MacKaye (appointing MacKaye Taylor's sole representative in the United States and Canada to produce, sell and rent the said plays) were formally drawn up.

FIRST NIGHT OF *CLANCARTY*: COLLABORATIONS AND COPYRIGHTS

Pursuant to these play interests with Tom Taylor, MacKaye wrote (March 9th) to George Becks,* an English actor and theatrical agent in America, mentioning the London première (on that date) of his collaboration with Tom Taylor, *Clancarty*:

"Yours of Jan. 30th has been forwarded to me from Manchester. I intend to return to America in the early part of the summer—not, however, with the intention of remaining but in order to place at various theatres in the U. S. several plays of which I am the joint author with Tom Taylor, among them *Arkwright's Wife*. I shall be very glad to treat with you for this play, which has been very much improved since you saw it last summer. It ran over 60 nights here in London with great success, and was only withdrawn because the Globe Theatre was in treaty for Halliday's version of *Dombey and Son*.

"I have secured the copyright in America of *'Twiist Axe and Crown, Joan of Arc, Clancarty*, (our new play which appears at the Olympic to-night for the first time), *Arkwright's Wife, The First Printer, Time Tells All, Alive at the Roots, A Queen's Revenge, Cromwell, or God's Guidance*, and *The Homeopathic Cure*. Mr. Taylor has signed documents before the American Consul here, proving me as joint author with him in these plays, and I as a citizen of the U. S. have copyrighted them there. When I return to America, I shall be glad to show you the manuscripts, which I shall have with me."

AN OUTLINE OF PHILOSOPHY; "THE MYSTERIES OF EMOTION"

At this time, a notebook of my father's contains, in a sketch-outline, *The Philosophy of Human Nature, and the Practical Progress of Mankind*, beginning:

"The end sought by the unfolding of this philosophy is the Perfection of the *Individual Entity* in Man—by *Universal Law*."

The most revealing documents concerning his inner and outer life are some letters of his correspondence with Alger which, in

* In America, Alfred Becks, the brother of this George Becks, became later my father's private secretary. Cf. page i, 273.

spite of their considerable length, are here included, because they are indispensable to a true understanding of his character and motives throughout his career. Herein—more than fifty years ago—he reveals his thoughts and plans for creating in America for the first time a school for training actors and a school for teaching the art and craft of playwriting—movements which are just beginning to gather large momentum in our universities and elsewhere to-day. Herein also are hints of his own special researches and ideas regarding the subject of *Emotion*, which later he taught in America.

From "The Box" (February 21, '74) he wrote to Alger in Boston:

"My precious friend—At last I take my pen to write you again, after five months of the hardest sort of work. What do you think I have been doing? You can't imagine I'm sure! *Bien!* I will tell you.

"You know that I am one of those foolish creatures who is constantly associating his own career with the idea of progress for mankind. This tendency of mine is apparently in spite of myself, and I perfectly understand how absurd it may seem to most people. Why should anything I do be of any great consequence to the world? It seems very presumptuous and conceited in me to entertain such an idea; and yet I constantly find myself, involuntarily, leaving the work which common sense would declare to be my proper occupation, and going heart and soul into something that at the outset appears preposterous and semi-insane, but which I am madly impelled to do by a feeling that such work will have a more universal value than that which seems more practically conducive to my own personal profit. I suppose that this overwhelming preponderance of instinctive forces at certain times of our lives is in reality the manifestation of that universal will in which we live and which is the Providence of Creation. However, to cease surmises and come to facts—this has been my occupation latterly:

*"Instead of going into the world as an actor, I have retired into my study, impelled by a great desire to more perfectly prepare myself to lay the foundations of a complete and radical reform of dramatic philosophy. I have been investigating with the greatest ardour the whole subject of Emotion. I have been developing its facts into three distinct branches of study. First—the physiognomy of Emotion. Second—The physiology of Emotion. Third—The poetry of Emotion. **

* These studious investigations and developments of a philosophy largely his own (from his young manhood) were, through his later lectures and teachings in America, solely attached to the name and notoriety of "Delsarte." Cf. under Index.

SIX NEW PLAYS: A RADICAL FOOL: CHRIST IN THE EYES
OF THE WORLD

"At the same time that I have been working at the mysteries of Emotion, I have been giving my leisure hours to *writing plays*. I have just finished two with Tom Taylor—am at work on another with W. G. Wills—have finished another entirely my own, and have two more of my own under way. I wish to return to America this spring with a batch of first-class plays for our stage: plays that will set people thinking while they amuse.

"There are two great requisites to be attained before the drama can commence its true career: First—*A great dramatic school of actors*; Secondly—*A lofty school of playwriting*. Both of these I dare to hope for in America. For both of these I live; and, in spite of myself, I find that I can take no hearty interest in anything which does not tend to advance the interests of these ideas, that keep my soul on fire and give me the heart to live. When I return to America, I shall be better prepared to work out my ideas than ever before.

"*I spent a long time in Paris studying the organisation of the Théâtre Français and the Conservatoire*, with my good friend Régner—who is director of the stage at the Français and Professor of the first class at the Conservatoire. In this way, I have accumulated an immense deal of practical knowledge concerning the administration of a great school, and a great theatre which will be useful to us in the future. *Here in England, I have been studying the art of playwriting and serving an apprenticeship under the best masters*. The play which I have just finished—this is my own original play—has excited considerable enthusiasm among managers here and is to be brought out next season. It was finished too late for production this season. This play is called—*A Radical Fool*—and the idea which I had in mind in writing it was that of the man who should be most practically akin to Christ, and yet show him to be, to worldly eyes—radically, a fool. The intent of my play is to hint strongly to a Christian world that its Christianity is a sham and a humbug, and that they are just as prone to condemn the Christ to-day as the Scribes and Pharisees of old. . . . Plays that can at once awaken liberal thought and stir the emotions of sympathy and fun—are the ones that will do poor hardworking tired and thirsty Humanity the most good.

PLANS FOR AMERICA—"A CONSERVATORY TO TEACH THE ARTS OF
PLAYWRITING AND OF ACTING"

"Now I hope to see a grand *corps of playwrights* spring up in America—prepared to give the public productions of this kind. There is a superabundance of talent among our authors—but how practically to construct a play is as yet an unknown art in America. That art I have been ardently studying and I believe to some little purpose. I shall probably return to America next May, and if the time shall have come—that is, if the disciples can be found whose souls are burning with the same ardent desires to accomplish sublime things as my own—

I shall settle down quietly *to begin the practical work of creating a corps of fine actors and dramatic authors.*

"I shall organise a conservatory—in little and in secret—and drill a class thoroughly from the very beginning and, when they are ready, I shall unexpectedly produce a new order of play and a higher order of talent to the stage.

"This is, of course, confidential. Mr. Monroe may know of these hopes and intentions—no one else beside yourself. I wish you would show him this letter, and ask him to write me a few words about the practical possibility of gathering together the talent and organising, in secret, such a conservatory in Boston. I shall return armed with all the knowledge requisite thoroughly to commence operations. I shall have spent two years over here in conscientious study of the best means to attain the ends in view. . . . Many months ago, I saw Gustave Delsarte and presented your proposition to him. He promised to consider it and reply to you concerning it. Has he done so? I expect to go to Paris soon again, and I will get his recipe for the parfait café and send it to you. With love to all your family, as well as to Mr. Monroe and his, ever in deep affection, yours—*J. S. MacKaye.*

"I enclose you the programme of a new lecture I have written upon *The Mystery of Emotion.* I wish you would tell me what you think of its suggestiveness. This lecture is far superior to the one formerly given by me. Perhaps it may be well for me to deliver it in America as a sort of call for talent and co-operation. You see I am still firm in my old faith and still strong in my old hope. Time and study but deepen my faith and fortify my hope. Please keep all the knowledge of my writing plays away from general ears, as I do not wish it known, as yet, to the general public. Monroe, of course, can know. Once more with love—yours—*J. S. M.*"

AN INVITATION TO RETURN TO AMERICA

This letter crossed on the Atlantic a portentous letter to him from Alger, written from the Windsor Hotel, New York, February 28, '74, as follows:

"My dear Friend, I have here in New York a friend, a woman of great wealth, who is wholly devoted to the cause of human improvement, devoting all her income and all her energies to doing good. I have imbued her with so much faith in the value of that system of truth and art which is now intrusted to you as the representative of Delsarte that she requests me to make you this offer.

"She is a widow, without children, an elderly woman of the very noblest character and of irreproachable position. She has a large house, elegantly furnished on 10th Street, a few doors from Broadway. She will give you the use of the whole house, furniture, servants, and pay all bills, if you will come with your family—your wife taking from her the cares of housekeeping and allowing her to board with you, retaining the second floor to herself; all this simply on condition that

you will faithfully devote yourself to teaching the public, through pupils, lectures, and such other ways as you best can.

"The idea which I have given her is that no greater good can be done now than to give the American people that Ideal of Personal Perfection which it is the end of Delsarte's System to develop *. Is this not just the opportunity for you? Come, and I will join with you in every way I can. We will put ourselves in training to teach the people and to exemplify in ourselves what we teach. Carpenter will write you. I cannot doubt your assent. . . . The generous woman I refer to is Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson, No. 46 E. 10th Street. The house will be ready the first of May, and you can come directly there with your family and luggage. Please write me your decision at once. How unspeakably pleased I am at the thought of being with you again!—*Wm. R. Alger.*"

"REMBRANDT LUCK"; "A LONELY WAY"

This letter, heralding an eager welcome for his return to America, was to lead to a new set of influencing circumstances in my father's life, incidentally determining the birthplace of the writer of this memoir. It arrived at a time of strain and anxiety in health and finances, lifting a heavy burden of depression. It was a case of the constantly recurring contrasts in the family fortunes: contrasts which my mother described in another of her happy phrasings: "*Rembrandt luck!* It's our Rembrandt luck, my dears! Life paints our canvas that way: high lights and deeps of dark, where the figures glitter or gloom in splendours and penumbras: Out and in we go, in—and out again!"

My father's answer to the above letter from Alger is partially lost, but the last page of his answer has survived and reads as follows:

"Well, my friend—it is a *lonely way*. Few there are who are ready and joyous to travel toward the attainment of the Good, the Beautiful and True. Good eating, quiet smoking, undisturbed repose of body and plenty of money—these are the most innocent and high ambitions of almost all we meet. How to blend these good things with the better bliss of a spiritual life—is an art almost unknown; but it is, to my mind, the supreme art. Alas! Its devotees are few and far between!

"I long to accept your blessed invitation, and go to you at once. Something whispers me: 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst—

* *N.B.* Compare—on pages ii, 170-172,—MacKaye's comment concerning his own origination of "that practical philosophy of perfection for the individual" which Alger here misapprehensively assigns to Delsarte. Thus Alger's nobly intended (but not always rightly cognizant) interpretation of MacKaye to his friends (and to the public) did much to inhibit MacKaye—constituted as he was—from revealing or urging his own vital contributions to the so termed "Delsarte System."

for they shall be filled!' Dear friend, you can never know how much I have needed you. How have I found you? By seeking God. You are his gift.

*'Still the gifts of God our hopes outrun:
Searching with a lamp, I found the sun.'*

"You see, your *own* words are my best expounders. Grant me, then, quickly a few of thy rays, O Sun! In life, mind and heart yours—*MacKaye.*"

FAREWELLS: TAYLOR'S PARTY—SIR COUTTS-LINDSAY, ETC.; RÉGNIER

The next two months appear to have been filled with closing up his work in England, making preparations for departure and holding last meetings with many friends.

"Remember, my dear MacKaye," wrote Tom Taylor (from Lavender Sweep, April 11th), "we expect you on Monday. I have told my guests of your intention and your object, so you will find them prepared: a good party—Sir Coutts-Lindsay, etc.—and I hope a well-disposed one, as well as one likely to be influential in promoting your object. . . . If you like to come over to-morrow, Sunday, with wife and boys, to lunch and talk over things, we shall be at home and very glad to see you."

What were my father's "intention and object" above mentioned, is not here stated; but I believe his purpose probably was to set forth to a cultivated group of London society (as he had formerly done to such groups in Boston, Cambridge and New York) some of the principles of æsthetic philosophy which he had been further developing in relation to the art of the theatre. If so, the result is hinted in his letter of May first to Alger, quoted on page 226; and Sir Coutts-Lindsay, President of Grosvenor Gallery, may perhaps have seemed to him of that 'greenery-yallery' calibre, later satirised by W. S. Gilbert in his *Patience*.

To part with Tom Taylor was a true sorrow for my father. Years later, in an interview (1879), he said of him:

"Of all my friends in London Tom Taylor was the best. He is an ideal man, and lived the noblest life of any man that I ever knew over there."

From Paris (May 14th), Régnier wrote in a farewell greeting, answering a letter which begged him to come to America:

"Je suis maintenant trop vieux, mon cher ami, pour songer à traverser les mers. A l'âge de 67 ans, j'ai quelque idée qu'un tel voyage me tuerait. Mais j'espère bien que nous nous verrons encore.

"Apropos de votre brillant début et de vous même, vous ai-je-dit que Wilkie Collins m'avait fait de vous un éloge qui, partout d'un homme aussi compitent, vous aurait fait le plus grand plaisir. . . . A bientôt, donc, je l'espère, mon beau tragédien, et mille et mille souhaits et amitiés de votre affectionné—*Régnier*."

WESTWARD HO!—"AMERICA ALONE IS BROAD AND FREE AND EARNEST"

To Alger my father wrote (from the Temple Club, May first) this final letter from England, expressing some reasons for his ardent belief that his place of usefulness and his call to work were in his native land:

"My dear friend—I cannot describe to you the joy I feel in having my return to America and to you assured. Many friends in America wish me to remain here, and think it very unwise for me to go back until I have made a wider mark here. This is a most plausible idea of my duty, but they cannot understand, as I do, that my place is where I can give with the greatest facility, to those most interested, the ideas which Providence has entrusted to my care. . . . *I consider my career as an actor of subordinate importance to my career as a teacher*; and I feel that America alone is broad and free and earnest enough to utilise what I have to give to the world. England is too narrow, slow and conventional to see the worth of new ideas. Her upper classes are the most indifferent. The very people who, from extent of culture, might best understand, are the very ones who least like being 'bored' with new ideas. They are wedded to a sensuous and easy life, and worship inertia. . . . Ever your own—*J. S. M.*"

On May 16th, 1874, he sailed on the Cunard *S.S. Calabria*, with his son, Harold, for New York. From the ship ("Sunday morning, May 17th"), he wrote back to my mother:

"We are at anchor in Queenstown bay—with the screaming gulls and the Hibernian biddys, in the small boats, about us. . . . Now that I am fairly aboard ship, I feel the results of all the poignant anxiety and emotions of the last two months. Time will convince Father of my rightness in refusing to compromise matters. . . . I have forgotten my keys—my Tom Taylor papers—my marine glass—my writing case, filled with important letters. . . . Bring all safely to me. . . . I hope to be in fine fettle to begin a new and successful career in America. Au revoir, my darlings all! If hearts could affect the Fates, I would give mine gladly to secure your happiness. Angels guard you!"

Soon afterward, having packed up and left for good their little home, "The Box," on Denmark Hill, my mother followed with the rest of the family. On a stormy and perilous voyage,* barely

* On this voyage (my mother related) a fellow-passenger, crazed by the desperate condition of the ship, put on his dress-suit and tall hat and, rushing upstairs through the praying passengers, banged on the closed hatchways, crying out that he was going home and demanding the ship's doors opened.

escaping shipwreck, they brought with them the old tall London clock, which was to ring in another twenty years of success, vicissitude and affection in the life of Steele MacKaye on his native shores.

CHAPTER VIII
LECTURING AND PLAY-PRODUCING
New England and New York

1874-'76

AN EAGER LECTURE PUBLIC: REDPATH: A FIELD READY FOR SOWING

THUS, IN LATE MAY OF 1874, "J. STEELE" MACKAYE SET FOOT again in New York; but it was a very different homecoming from that of the autumn of 1870, when "James Steele" MacKaye, then publicly unknown, had returned from England to announce the name of Delsarte for the first time in America.

During the two years of his absence, the seeds of dynamic ideas which he had sown by his first lectures and his first theatre experiment at the St. James had begun to take root in his own country and to spring up profusely, more at first in the fields of education and art than as yet in the theatre proper, which was concerned then, as now, almost wholly with commercial ventures.

So a real public demand, which he himself had created, encountered him on his return, calling upon him for leadership in a new movement; and one of the first to seek him out was the astute and enterprising Redpath, then the foremost lecture bureau manager of America. Through his enthusiasm and organising efficiency, MacKaye was soon to spread nation-wide the ideals which were seething within him for expression.—More than forty years afterward, on lecture tours of my own, in all parts of the country, I have observed the rich bourgeoning and the still quickening memory of those ardent campaigns of my father during the 'Seventies and 'Eighties.

CLANCARTY AND ARKWRIGHT'S WIFE: WALLACK'S AND
BOSTON MUSEUM

On his return to America, after meeting the philanthropic Mrs. Thompson and settling in the 10th Street house, his first concern of duty was to attend to placing his Tom Taylor collaborations. On June 24th, 1874, from 46 East 10th St., he wrote to Alger:

"At last, dear friend, I believe I can start for Boston. I have succeeded in placing *Clancarty* at Wallack's, and hope to-morrow to settle *Arkwright's Wife* at the Park Theatre. . . . Where are you going this summer? Why can't we all be together somewhere near Monroe? To play and laugh—and be trivial boys awhile, that we may grow the

greater men when the time comes to put away childish things! * Yours ever—heart and hand—J. S. M."

In Boston he communicated with Richard M. Field, who for many years was manager of the famous Boston Museum. From there Field wrote to him:

(July 1, '74): "I am pleased to accept *Arkwright's Wife*, which is peculiarly adapted to this house. I will do everything in my power to make it a success to our great mutual advantage. In regard to the more powerful play of *Clancarty*, I cannot of course compete with Mr. Cheney's offer, but I should like very much to do it, if ever circumstances so permit."

From the then eminent New York manager, William Stuart, formerly business partner of Edwin Booth at the Winter Garden, he received the following:

(July 13): "I read the pieces and will be glad to read any others you may have. My chief objection to *Arkwright's Wife* is the dialect; I fear an American audience would not stand such a load of Lancashire. I have not the least objection to its being played first in Boston. On the contrary, I will go on to see it."

Accordingly, *Arkwright's Wife* was produced, October 26,† at the Boston Museum, where MacKaye kept in touch with its production there, as these notes to him from the manager suggest—the first referring to Arkwright's invention, the "spinning-jenny."

(Sept. 2): "Will you be good enough to send me the machine which you were kind enough to promise me for use in *Arkwright's Wife*, as I intend doing the piece immediately?" (Oct. 29): "I have been gratified to send the tickets for this evening by the bearer of your note. Yrs. very respectfully, *Richard M. Field*."

SUMMER COTTAGE AT NEWPORT; H. J. MONTAGUE; REDPATH

Meantime, in late June, MacKaye had moved with his family to Newport for the summer. In a reminiscence, my mother has written me:

"Your father and I first made an exploring trip to find a cottage. So from the Fall River boat we landed while it was still dark, and went out on the rocks to watch the sunrise. 'Now, Mary,' he said, as

* On Aug. 23, '74, Lewis B. Monroe wrote to him from Dublin, N. H.: "Can you not come and spend a week with me? Mr. Alger is coming about Sept. 3rd." So in September MacKaye probably made a first brief visit to Dublin, where later he wrote *Hazel Kirke*.

† The cast of *Arkwright's Wife* is given in Appendix.

the wonderful colours spread over the ocean, 'haven't I told you no place in the world can compare with Newport! Here's where I used to paint as a boy, and now I'll show you the old villa, and perhaps we can rent it back for the summer.' So, after breakfast, all excitement, he called for a carriage and told the driver to take us to the old address. Well, there we stopped at an empty lot!

"'Where on earth is it gone!' he exclaimed. 'This is the very spot, but where is the villa?' But no one could answer. The villa had vanished—utterly. So on we drove along the shore till, almost a mile out of town, suddenly he shouted to the driver: 'Stop! Stop! There it is now! That's our villa—yonder.'

"And sure enough—there it was. It had been moved away, bodily—quite in accord, Percy, with your boyish rhyme about our family propensity:

*'For constant moving from some place
Is characteristic of the race!'*—

"Soon after, we hired a cottage not far from there, and that summer we had many good times. Your father was very busy—as always, and there came many people to see him on business. Amongst others came for a visit H. J. Montague*, the handsome English actor, who had been engaged to Kate Terry. Your father had met him in England, through Lady Martin, and had persuaded him to come to America. He was the most popular dashing matinée idol of the time—for several years the 'leading man' at Wallack's, and the founder, namer and first Shepherd of the Lambs Club. He was an exuberant jester and story teller, very graceful and winning. It was said that most of the society women of Newport and New York had altars erected in their boudoirs to Montague. 'The Montague curl' was all the vogue.

"James Redpath† came often, planning out lecture tours. My own brother, James Medbery, was the creator of the idea of the lecture bureau, as early as 1865. 'The Lecture and Literary Bureau' his venture was called. After his health broke down, his pioneer work was taken up, in 1869, by Redpath, who was succeeded by Major Pond, of the Pond Bureau. In '74, Redpath had recently been in England, trying to bring Wilkie Collins over to America. I remember his describing how Collins would drink vast quantities of laudanum cock-tails with impunity. That season Redpath was handling the lecture tours of James T. Fields, Henry Ward Beecher, Robert Collyer, Gen. Lew Wallace, Mrs. Mary A. Livermore, Edward Eggleston, James Parton and Wendell Phillips;‡ but he was particularly enthusiastic

* Montague's business concerned MacKaye's play, *A Radical Fool*, which was called for rehearsal under A. M. Palmer at the Union Square Theatre, New York, advertised for production there (with Montague in the chief part), but was never produced. For further data in regard to *A Radical Fool*, and four letters from Montague to MacKaye, see Appendix.

† During the Civil War, James Redpath, biographer of John Brown, was war-correspondent of the New York Tribune. In 1865, he organized free schools at Charleston, S. C.

‡ In the 'Seventies, Redpath managed also Ralph Waldo Emerson, John B. Gough, Mrs. Abby Sage Richardson, Charles Sumner, Josh Billings, etc.

about your father's lecturing, which occupied him during much of the following autumn and winter."

"A 'STAR' OF THE FIRST MAGNITUDE"; GAMUTS; THE PHILOSOPHY OF EMOTION

Concerning these lectures Redpath wrote in a circular letter ("Boston, August 24, 1874) :

"*Mr. MacKaye is a 'star' of the first magnitude.* I venture to predict that, if he can be induced to remain in the lyceum, it will not be more than two or three years before he will be as popular as John B. Gough or Wendell Phillips. The best proof I can offer of my sincerity is this: I have myself engaged MacKaye for twenty nights for *Boston alone*. Subjoined is a list of some of Mr. MacKaye's lectures on the 'Philosophy of Emotion and Its Expression':

- I. The Mystery of Emotion.
- II. Gesture as a Language.
- III. The Philosophy of Laughter.
- IV. The Mystic Law of Beauty.
- V. The Marvels of the Human Face and Hand.
- VI. Nature's Art.
- VII. Masks and Faces of Society.
- VIII. The Emotional Significance of the Serpent.
- IX. The Philosophy of Love."

The first lecture, here referred to—"The Mystery of Emotion,"—included MacKaye's expositions of the following themes: *

"I. The relation of Emotion to Motion and Form. Illustrated by gesture and attitude, and by drawings on the blackboard. II. *Æsthetic Gymnastics*. III. Exercises invented to develop a subtle and unbroken Equilibrium in the body. IV. Exercises to develop Flexibility of the various articulations of the Head, Torso, and Limbs. V. Exercises to develop Precision of Expression, including the following Gamuts of Emotion in Facial Expression and Pantomime:

"VI. Gamuts of Expression in the Face.† (In these exercises the features pass with careful precision through a series of expressions, closely allied in nature, dissolving very slowly the one into the other.)

"VII. Gamut of Emotion in Pantomime.†

"VIII. Illustrations of the Primary Elements of Emotion (Thought, Affection, Passion) by Recitations."

* Listed in a programme of the lecture, delivered by MacKaye at Boston Music Hall, October 20, 1874. In this list, the "*Æsthetic Gymnastics, Exercises invented to develop Equilibrium—Flexibility—Precision—and the Gamuts of Expression*"—constitute the basis (invented solely by MacKaye) for that movement in America known for two generations as "The Delsarte System."

† These gamuts (a total of 42) are listed in Appendix.

From New York, on October 25th, MacKaye wrote to Prof. Monroe in Boston:

"Since my return here, I have been incessantly occupied in laying out the course of lessons which it is proposed that I shall give in Boston.

"The 11th of next November will be the anniversary of Delsarte's birth. *I am writing a lecture on his life for that occasion.* His life was a most thrilling one, full of the grandest inspirations to every struggling man. Fortunately, I have a mass of material * in the shape of notes taken from Delsarte's own lips and those of his intimate friend, Raymond Brucker, which—combined with such printed lines as I have—will enable me to make out a clear and most interesting story of the most significant episodes in the life of Delsarte. . . . I feel certain that the knowledge of his life, of the princely recognition of equality which the poor ragpicker won from royalty in Europe, would breed an intense desire to know something of the works by which he achieved his triumphs. . . . My lecture on *The Mystery of Emotion* I have entirely rewritten and much improved since my return to New York."

NEW ENGLAND TOUR; FIRST OVERHEAD-LIGHTING AND DISPENSING WITH FOOTLIGHTS; "AN INNOVATION," 1874

On October 30th, '74, he wrote from Boston to my mother (at 46 East 10th St., New York):

"I am very busy with Redpath arranging for my course of lectures here in Boston. I commence on the night of the 11th of November with a Lecture on Delsarte—to be followed on the 12th and 13th with the *Mystery of Emotion*—and *Gesture as a Language*. . . . My engagements are as follows—3d. Nov.—Portsmouth; 9th—Salem; 11th, 12th and 13th—Boston; 16th—Taunton; 18th, 19th, 20th—Boston; 23d—Somewhere in Penn. . . . I am overwhelmed with work, thank God—writing my *Lecture on Delsarte*, etc. I have taken a room here in Temple St."

In view of latter day developments in stage lighting, generally considered as *recent* "innovations," the following excerpt from an article in *The Portsmouth Journal*, Nov. 7th, 1874, reporting my father's appearance in Portsmouth, N. H., is significant for its record of his use of overhead and side lighting, with the omission of footlights, more than fifty years ago † :

* *The Life of Delsarte*, thus prepared and written by him from this "mass of material," after being delivered as a lecture, was published in *Werner's Voice Magazine* (about Dec., '74?) and copied in *The Denver Music and Drama*. Later it was published in several books, widely disseminated throughout America, with no acknowledgment whatever to MacKaye.

† In his *Life of David Belasco* William Winter writes (page 244): "The much needed addition to the technical literature of the theatre is a *comprehensive, authoritative and just account of the origin and development of modern stage mechanism of the art of stage lighting*. The pioneer achievements

"The address of James Steele MacKaye on *The Mystery of Emotion* was, from beginning to end, brilliant and deeply interesting. Seldom indeed have we seen such a rapt audience. The stage was arranged expressly for the occasion, with a set scene, representing a study.

"*The stage lights were at the top and side, an innovation which might be copied with peculiar advantage, since the light is thus thrown upon the upper instead of the lower portion of the actor's figure.*"

"The actor's figure" here refers to MacKaye's dramatic impersonations (of *Hamlet*, *Silas Marner*, *Hotspur*) whereby his lecture was dramatically "illustrated." Thus these new "innovating" methods in lighting had been invented and carefully studied by MacKaye with reference to histrionic phases of the theatre's art—not merely to a "lecture" in the usual sense. The printed programme * of his lecture on *The Mystery of Emotion* thus records the three "illustrations," impersonated by him:

"First Illustration. The influence of Thought over Expression. Illustrated by *Hamlet's* monologue, "To be or not to be."

"Second. The Form of Expression engendered by Affection. Illustrated by *Silas Marner's* confession to *Eppie*. From George Eliot.

"Third. The tendency of Expression under the influence of Passion. Illustrated by the words of *Hotspur*, after hearing *Henry Fourth's* stern demand for the surrender of *Hotspur's* prisoners. First part of *King Henry IV*, Act 1, Scene III."

BLEEDING LUNGS; "THE LAST DOLLAR"; "OVERWHELMED BY DUNS"

For several months he was lecturing, from Maine to Pennsylvania, and teaching a class in Boston. From there he wrote to my mother:

(Nov. 10, '74; Boston): "Dear Molly—Just returned from Salem. My lecture was pronounced a *great success*, though I was played out.

of Edwin Booth, Steele MacKaye and Augustin Daly are, as a rule, blandly ignored in writing on those subjects, and the movement for "Stage Reform" which began in Austria in 1879-'80 is taken as the starting-point. . . . On this subject Belasco has said: "I have been informed by young journalists that in dispensing with footlights I have 'imitated' Mr. Granville Barker. Mr. Max Reinhardt and various other so-called 'innovators.' Such statements are nonsensical. My first regular production without 'foots' was made in 1879, when I staged Morse's *Passion Play* in San Francisco." This was five years *after* the above-mentioned first experiment of the kind made by Steele MacKaye in 1874, which he further developed in stage productions of his own plays, produced during that five years' interval and afterwards.

* The divisions of the lecture were as follows: "1. Delsarte. 2. The Physiology of Emotion—illustrated by drawings on the blackboard and the elementary expressions of head and face, torso and limbs. 3. The discoveries this science predicts. 4. Art and its Requirements. 5. Classification of Human Expression. 6. General Principles of Expression—illustrated. 7. Instruments of Expression. 8. Æsthetic Gymnastics. 9. Creations of Character in Art. 10. Typical Form of Emotions and Character—illustrated by recitations. Conclusion—The Want and the Way."

I was delightfully entertained by good Mr. and Mrs. Edward Payson *. After the lecture, a large party of prominent citizens of Salem met at Mr. Payson's to see me, and we had a charming time. . . . I am driven nearly crazy with all I have to do. I am troubled with severe pains in my lungs, though I have had no bleeding for four days. I guess it's all right; at any rate I'm getting used to it. Enclosed is the last dollar I can spare. I have been overwhelmed with duns since being here."

(Nov. 12, Boston): "Sweetheart of my best life. . . . I lectured last night on Delsarte. . . . Every one expressed profound interest. . . . Mr. Alger greatly delighted. . . . Let us trust the Creative Manhood in the Universe to fortify us in our efforts to improve. . . . I lecture Thanksgiving in Maine."

(Nov. 23, Boston): "Darling—One word of love before the day is dead . . . Arrived here this morn. Talked to Mr. Monroe's class an hour, came back here to 52 Temple St., and was charmed to receive a visit from Dr. Bartol. He spent an hour and, I fell in love with him—one of God's cleanest and best. . . . My class is progressing, subscriptions increasing. . . . God bless you—in wild haste, Thine by God's love."

BOSTON; C. A. BARTOL; POETRY; "A BOYISH WOOER"

This Dr. C. A. Bartol, essayist, friend of Emerson and of Hawthorne, was a leader of the literary galaxy at Boston. On December 19th, he wrote to my father:

"At my home, No. 17 Chestnut Street, at 7 o'clock on the evening of the 20th, please let me depend on you to meet with me and my friends. With best memories and hopes, yours, *C. A. Bartol.*"

On tour again, my father wrote from Pittsburgh, Dec. 1st:

"Darling Heartsease—all goes well. Made a decided hit at Indiana, last night. Left there 6 this morn.—arr. here 10.30 . . . bitterly cold . . . meals horrid . . . travelling wearisome. Hug and kiss my darling, precious boys, one and all for me. Bestow eloquent benedictions upon all my brothers and sisters of 46 E. 10th and a special blessing on the patient waiting mother—God be with her! With you Sat. early. Oh, what joy—three days of peace at home!—Don't forget recitations for my new lecture on the passions. In haste thy Lover and Husband."

Once more in Boston, "Jan. 24th, '75," he wrote to my mother a letter, here included for its revealings of some of the deepest motives which animated him throughout his life:

"Sweetheart,—Peace, comfort and good cheer to thee, this quiet Sabbath day! . . . I am sitting in a room at the top of the Parker

* The parents of his devoted friend, William E. Payson, of Norton, Mass., who soon after married the widow of my uncle, James K. Medbery. That winter, Payson and F. B. Carpenter lived with the MacKayes at 46 E. 10th St.



DESIGN BY J. STEELE MACKAYE OF STAGE-SETTING FOR HIS PLAY "*Rose Michel*"
From a painting by him, 1875.



J. H. STODDART AS *Pierre Michel*



STUART ROBSON AS *Moulinet*
(With his dog, *Pollywog*), in "*Rose Michel*" (page 246).



REV. WILLIAM R. ALGER
Author of "The Life of Edwin Forrest".

Alger and Monroe were pupils and loyal friends of MacKaye (cf. Index).



PROF. LEWIS B. MONROE
Dean of Boston University, School of Oratory.



BRISS FARM, BRATTLEBORO, VT., SHOWING "THE KIPLING COTTAGE" (p. i, 240)
In cottage, at right, Steele MacKaye wrote his first version of "Paul Kavanagh," 1875. The same cottage was used by Rudyard Kipling as his writing studio, 1892. This photo about 1875.



46 E. TENTH ST., NEW YORK
(House at left with tree in yard.)

Here Steele MacKaye inaugurated the first Theatre School of Expression in the English-speaking world, 1874. Here, in 1875, Percy MacKaye was born (page 238).

House.—As I look out of the windows, I see nothing but the grey sky, and the snow softly falling amid the almost breathless silence of a New England Sunday. Now and then I hear in the distance the exquisite voice of a canary, or the subdued jingle of sleigh-bells.

"Sitting here all alone in the midst of this silence—my thoughts have drifted back through life. I have seen my errors with a clearer eye.—I have realised as well the few holy things the years have brought to me—the holiest of all—my love for you. Filled with the sense of this one hallowed gift—the result, to my surprise (as well as yours!) has been—the lines that I enclose: fain offering of a fond heart to the one who has done more to make me good and manly than all the world beside. I know you will accept them—in spite of their literary worthlessness—for after all, it is as though we were children again—in the eternal childlikeness of our spirit life. Though I am no poet in *expression*—my love for you is all the poetry of my life. . . . Embrace the living, lovely, blessings love's pure passion has bestowed upon us, and think of me always as

Your Lover Husband—J. Steele MacKaye.

"I am off to Rockland, Maine, to-morrow morning.—I pray heaven that one week from to-day I may be with you in the midst of our darlings for whom we live."

NEW YORK, TENTH ST.; FIRST SCHOOL OF EXPRESSION;
"A COUNTERFEITER'S DEN"

Meantime, the headquarters of the family had been established at 46 East Tenth Street—a stately four-storied brick house, with ample rooms of high ceilings, many fireplaces and old-fashioned panelled woodwork, which originally had been built, early in the century, for his own residence, by Brevoort, proprietor of the Brevoort House, whose ancient hostelry, still in use, stands nearby, around the corner on Fifth Avenue. Further east, on the N. E. corner of 10th and Broadway was Goupil's famous art store, which "Jim McKaye," in 1866, had planned to rival as the representative of Rousseau, *et al.*

Here, at No. 46, with their new friend, the wealthy and eccentric Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson (widow of Thomas Thompson, a wealthy citizen of Boston), the MacKaye household of children, nurses, relatives, guests, servants and animal pets, was ensconced amid great paintings and portraits by old masters (copies and originals) and rich, massive furnishings. Mrs. Thompson's love of paintings, by the way, and her benevolent patronage of painters, had a very notable recognition by the National Congress when she bought from Frank B. Carpenter (who then lived with MacKaye at Tenth Street) his great-scale painting of "The Emancipation Proclamation" and presented it to the nation, to hang perpetually in the

Capitol at Washington. On that occasion she was "granted the floor" of the Senate and House of Representatives—the first woman ever granted that honor.

At the Tenth Street house, in interims of lecture tours, my father was as ever intensely busy, starting his first school of expression, teaching his pupils, essaying new experiments in playwriting, turning at times again to his painter's easel, fascinating his guests and friends by his eloquence and aspiring plans, and his children by thrilling bedtime stories and games, housing strange animal refugees, and making secretive tests of inventions in the witching hours of midnight and early dawn.

For some of these inventive experiments, he had set up a metal turning lathe, in the top-story back, where heaps of coin-shaped metal, struck off from bars of brass, lay gleaming under gas-jets. From this room odd rumblings issued from behind closed doors during hours of household slumber. So it befell that these unwonted portents made fearful appeal to the imagination of a penny-dreadful-reading housemaid, who forthwith pried furtively to inspect the causes thereof, and fleeing to her friend, the corner policeman, reported that the roof of her master's house concealed a counterfeiter's den, whose arch-criminal keeper was none other than her master himself.

In sequel, the district police were roused to a midnight raid, the housemaid herself unchained the outdoor entrance, heavy footsteps ascended the stairs to the top floor back, sharp knocks resounded on the "counterfeiter's" door—and the astonished police were admitted, to share in a midnight supper of claret, crackers and cheese, while they listened, spellbound, to a lecture on the philosophy of invention, practically illustrated by brass bars, cog-wheels and the philosopher's turning lathe.

"JET," THE DUCK-DOG; ÆSTHETIC RHYTHMS OF A BOA-CONSTRUCTOR

One cold night, on one of his lecturing trips, there followed my father to his hotel in Chicago, after his lecture, an Irish "duck-dog," or retriever, with sleek-black curling hair and wonderful human eyes. This dog, whom he named *Jet*, he brought home to Tenth Street, to become for some years an intimate loved member of the family, instructed by my father in a repertory of tricks.

Here, too, he brought home a less-beloved outcast from South America—an enormous eleven-foot-long anaconda, which he purchased, from his friend, P. T. Barnum, for the purpose of study-

ing its ophidian rhythms, in his investigations of subconscious reactions in animals as related to the æsthetics of human expression. When the great snake arrived in its box, the porter lifted the lid, fleeing in terror as a huge head emerged; but my father at once lifted the long coils and allowed them to wind about his body; with the entirely fearless friendliness which he felt for all wild things. Numerous accounts were published of his wild animal friends. Concerning this serpent (grown seven feet longer in legend!) Nym Crinkle wrote later, in a long article with the caption, "*Steele MacKaye's Snakes*":

"The Psychic side of a snake's character—How boa-constrictors gamble about the Dramatist's library—His theory of snake charming—Boas and Rattlesnakes feel his sway—Nym Crinkle Uneasy:

"Some years ago, Steele MacKaye invited me to his house for a visit. Anna Dickinson * had told me something about his snake séances, but I had forgotten all about it, when I arrived there in the evening and was conducted to his study. Imagine my horror as, looking in, I saw my friend seated at a writing table, having for a companion an eighteen-foot South American boa, while the flattened head, with its little lidless eyes, lay within a foot of the manuscript upon which MacKaye was working. . . .

"'I will show you,' said MacKaye, 'that your fears are unworthy of you.' He then began to make sinuous and graceful passes with his hand, in which his arm imitated the convolutions of a serpent, describing graceful curves that seemed to pass from his shoulder along a flexible humerus to the metacarpal extremities.—The action apparently soothed the reptile, for it simply moved its flattened head in a swaying sympathetic motion and allowed MacKaye to grasp it gently at the neck and guide it wherever he pleased.

"'You can see,' he said, 'for yourself that the animal is soothed by a rhythmic motion. Now I will prove to you that unrhythmic motion irritates it, and so does unrhythmic sound.' He then began a new series of singularly ungraceful and spasmodic actions with his hand, which were not violent, and the serpent began to raise his head and dart out his black, forked tongue. . . .

CHARMING A RATTLESNAKE; "TABBY" AND THE PULVERIZED CHAIR

"Some months later, by the way, I saw MacKaye go through the same experiment with an old Pennsylvania rattlesnake in a wire cage in the Aquarium, on Broadway. He thrust his hand in at the little wire wicket of the cage, to the horror of Tode Hamilton and an Indian snake-charmer who were, with myself, the only witnesses.—The snake was as full of venom as an egg is of meat, and irritation meant certain death, but MacKaye demonstrated his complete power over the rattler, as he had done over the boa.

* Cf. page i, 238.

“‘One day,’ said MacKaye, ‘my boa-constrictor was coiled around that wicker chair you used to sit in, and I was writing. The door on the other side of the room was ajar, and our tabby cat came lazily in, with her tail straight up in the air. I heard a report like a pistol and the door was slammed suddenly shut. Talk about fractures! I don’t think there was a piece of that chair left that was six inches long. He just pulverised it, and shot himself against that door like a thunder-bolt. It was the cat, you say?—Nonsense, it was a splinter of that chair. I found a cut in his skin an inch and a half long.’

“‘What did you do with your pet?’

“‘Lost him. It was a confounded shame. I left him in a box in the cellar when I went to Boston to lecture, and my man forgot the blankets. My snake was frozen stiff.’”

DELSARTEAN COILS; BRAZILIAN DEER; GUINEA PIGS, WHITE MICE
AND SCARLET FEVER

Before this pathetic demise, the huge anaconda spent part of its days at Tenth Street immersed in the bath tub, though generally it was banished to the top story; for my mother (that being shortly before my birth) refused to set eyes on it. One day, however, a new pupil—Miss Anna Dickinson (a feminist leader, who afterwards acted *Hamlet*)—was ushered into the parlour, where she was introduced to her teacher of dramatic rhythms—through a barrage of serpentine coils!

In strange contrast, two other arrivals from the tropics were a pair of tiny Brazilian “mouse-deer,” exquisite miniature creatures hardly a foot high. Their home was a small barred box, lined by my father with looking-glass—to provide them with a little herd for company. From this they were often loosed, to scamper about the room on quick, slender legs—but never in the presence of the boa-constrictor!

To add to these diversities of an artist’s family life, which comprised also the ampler families of tame guinea-pigs and white mice, all of the children that winter had scarlet fever, which in those days was not officially quarantined.

ST. PATRICK’S EVE; CHIMES OF GRACE CHURCH; BIRTH OF THE
BIOGRAPHER

Amid such vocations and avocations of this ample mansion, on the eve of St. Patrick’s day, ’75, in the third story front, the writer of this memoir was ushered into the world. Nearly forty years later (in 1913), on “a sentimental journey” with my mother, I returned for a few minutes to that birthplace. During the passage of years, the stately mansion had become a house of sweat-shops,

and there a swart alien in strange tongue (Russian, perhaps, or Czeck) admitted us to that third-story room, now crowded with fur-garment cutters. Yet there, in my mother's remembering eyes and voice, it became once more a dim, hushed chamber, gleaming with bright coals from the grate of the marble mantel and a slit of day through the closed high wooden shutters. Nearby the bells of Grace Church began chiming again, as my mother said:

"Your father came to my bedside and murmured: 'Now, Molly, I'll open the shutters, and see what colour his eyes are.'—Then he stepped to the tall window, and the sudden sunlight shone in upon a little head with a shock of black hair.—That was a happy morning!"

Those same shutters now (far removed) are panels in my home on the New Hampshire hills. Where I look at them—remembering my mother's smile, that recalled my father's voice—the light of their mutual affection (inseparable from the motives of this memoir) has never faded away.

BRATTLEBORO, VT.; BLISS FARM; "JAKE," THE ROCKY-MT. GOAT

About six weeks after my birth, owing to risk of ill health in the Tenth Street house, my father decided to move, post-haste, with his family to the country. The place suggested by Mrs. Thompson* was a region of her native Vermont, amid the Connecticut Valley, in the township of Brattleboro, Vermont, of which my father's old teacher in art, William Morris Hunt, had also been a native. Accordingly, in late April, the family exodus occurred, and en route, sitting in the compartment of a parlour car, while crossing the Connecticut River, my father named his latest-born son after an old school friend, Percy Wallace.

In Brattleboro, about three miles from the town, that spring and summer were spent at Wilder Farm, in a setting of noble hills and verdant acres, watered by a pristine trout-brook. During intervals of his playwriting, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to his family and the new found joys of the wild country. With his

* Mrs. Thompson, *née* Elizabeth Rowell, was born in a log cabin at Lyndon, Vermont, Feb. 21, 1821, and died at Littleton, N. H., in 1899. She married Thomas Thompson (1798–1869), of Boston, (a man of culture and philanthropy, and a lover of art), whose inherited fortune of about a million dollars was left by him to his widow, during her life, and afterwards to "the sewing-women of Brattleboro," whom (gathered there to make garments for Civil War soldiers) Mrs. Thompson had aided in their work, while she and her husband were boarding, in 1861, at the Bliss Farm (known in 1927, as the Dickinson estate), next to Wilder Farm. The Thompson Trust has since founded the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital.

growing boys he was as full of pranks and mischief as they, teaching them also to ride, fish, and shoot at target. For them he bought (from his friend, Monroe, in Dublin) one of his numberless animal pets, a Rocky Mountain goat, named Jake, who joined the family for some years.

A NEW PLAY, *THE VAGABOND*; IN THE VAN OF RUDYARD KIPLING

Here, by the shady nook of an old stone wall, my mother filled a red-bound journal with exuberant poems for her children, and over the grass-rutted roads galloped horseback with my father among the hills.

Removed from the Wilder farm house, on the adjoining Bliss farm, was a little one-storied cottage, which my father used as a studio, and here he wrote the first version (entitled *The Vagabond*) of his French Revolutionary play, later called *Paul Kauvar*. Seventeen years afterwards, this same little cottage was used as a writing studio by Rudyard Kipling,* who married a Brattleboro neighbour of the Blisses, Miss Caroline Balustier. A memento of that regional sojourn may be found in Kipling's *Just So Stories*, written later for his own children, whose lilting imitations of the local Boston and Maine railroad brakemen—"Change here for Winchester, Ashuelot, Nashua, Keene and stations on the Fitchburg road!"—recur in the text with humorous grotesqueness.

A copy of *The Vagabond*, as written by my father, during that summer of 1875, remains among his manuscripts. Some initial ideas for the plot MacKaye had conceived much earlier, when a student in Paris.† The characters and scenes, as well as the text, differ materially from the final version of the play, produced as *Anarchy* in 1887.

NEW YORK; A. M. PALMER; REFUSAL OF A LATER SUCCESS

In July, MacKaye made a brief trip to New York, where A. M. Palmer wrote to him (July 13th) from the Union Square Theatre:

"Since I saw you we have determined to open the theatre for a brief preliminary season. ‡ My hands are full. Remind me on Thursday morning of our appointment."

* Concerning his occupancy of this Bliss Farm cottage during some months of 1892, Mr. Kipling wrote me, in 1925, a letter of verification from his English home in Burwash, Sussex. See photo of this cottage, listed in Illustrations.

† Cf. page i, 74.

‡ This preliminary season was for a brief revival of *Led Astray*, about which Boucicault complains in his letter to Steele MacKaye, on page i, 263.

Again in New York, on September first he received from Palmer the following note concerning *The Vagabond*:

"I have reread and reconsidered your play, and hasten to send you the conclusion I have come to. I do not see my way clear to do the play. A great difficulty is the scenic arrangement of the piece—a difficulty which at present I can see no way to obviate without seriously injuring the continuity of the story. Another difficulty (and a greater one) is that I do not believe I could properly cast it. Still another is that I am not prepared just yet to venture upon a play, the incidents of which are chiefly historical. . . . The play, as I have often assured you, is an admirable one of its kind, but I am afraid that its appeal will be limited to a class of persons who love to contemplate the poetic and tragic period in which it is laid. Unfortunately for us, that class, in this community, is not large."

Produced a dozen years later, this play, *The Vagabond*, rewritten as *Paul Kauvar or Anarchy*, proved a very notable success, thus annotating Palmer's reputation for a certain timidity in the selection of plays. Three of his biggest managerial successes, *The Two Orphans* (commended to him by Cazauran), *Jim the Penman*, and *Alabama*, are said to have been urged upon him against his own will and judgment.

J. V. PRITCHARD; CANADIAN BORDER; PLAY-WRITING AND
POISON-IVY

During this summer of '75, MacKaye wrote two plays—one by himself alone, *The Vagabond*; another, *Queen and Woman*, written in collaboration with J. V. Pritchard, a friend of Tom Taylor and a recent acquaintance of some wealth, whom he visited at his summer lodge on the Vermont border of Canada, where he owned a remote iron-smelting plant. To this lonely but richly equipped lodge in the wilderness, early in September, my father and mother (with their six-months old infant, this biographer, and a nurse, "Annie") drove many miles from the railroad through the dark forests, arriving late in the night at their comfortable destination, ablaze with brilliant gas-lights and flaring log-fires. Here, entertained with ample English hospitality, they spent about a fortnight, during which my father worked on the new play, under physical pangs of a severe poison-ivy fever.

"He was so horribly poisoned," wrote my mother, "that he couldn't put on a coat, but had to wear a great waterproof cloak of Mrs. Pritchard's, in which he wrote madly at play-writing with his dreadful arm."

A SCENARIO: JOSEPH CHOATE'S NURSE; A "MIGHTY
MOVING" TO STAMFORD

"From the Pritchard's (continues my mother's reminiscence)—having left Aunt Sadie and the other children in Brattleboro—we came south to New York. While there, in the Tenth Street parlour (then shut up for the summer), your father began writing furiously on a new play (I can't remember now what it was), which he showed, in scenario form, to Mr. Palmer of the Union Square Theatre, *the* theatre of the day, next to Wallack's.

"Your father was chafing under the Delphic yoke of the difficultly-philanthropic Mrs. Thompson. His allowance had stopped from the Colonel, his father (after a recurrent clash of temperaments), and there we were!—Well, we determined not to live another year under the Thompsonian roof, so we rushed all about the suburbs of New York, hunting for a new home. You (Percy) and nurse had to travel everywhere with us, for you were then a nursing baby. That nurse, by the way, was the wonderful 'Choate Annie,' who had recently come to us from nursing Joseph Choate, Jr. (afterwards your class-mate at Harvard).

"At last we decided upon Stamford (Conn.), where Palmer and Wallack lived, and there we rented a house—the Clark place, near Washington Street—a large, square colonial residence, with a cupola, a capacious barn and ample grounds with great shade trees. . . . Then I, single-handed, attended to the mighty moving from New York. For by this time your father was absorbed in his theatrical plans. Palmer was so much interested by his scenario, that he asked him to undertake the adaptation of *Rose Michel*—a French success by Ernest Blum, imported from Paris. There had already been three versions made of it, but none satisfactory. Your father said he would not undertake the work, unless he had an absolutely free hand. He would, he said, take only the central idea of the play and work out his own characters and plot. Palmer told him to 'go ahead'—so ahead he went.

"This left *all* the moving to me, the 'impractical.' The Tenth Street residence was an immense, four-story house with basement, full to the roof of pictures, bric-a-brac and furniture. Mrs. Thompson had said, a dozen times, that if anybody would move her out of that house, without her knowing anything about it, she would bless them forever. So your father—with his usual breath-taking-away boldness—took her at her word. She, too, was in Brattleboro. So I separated our things from hers, sent ours to Stamford, hers to a storehouse, and then your father sent her a telegram saying the deed was done. . . . She was furious and was in Stamford before our things were unpacked. Your father, I remember, was in New York, and I had to take the brunt of her wrath. The moment he came, however, all was forgiven—for she adored him, as all the world did—yet *too* much forgiven, for she insisted upon taking our best room and paying us handsomely for it. So we had her again for the winter, with all her elderly tran-

scendentalism perched raven-like on the 'bust of Pallas' above our ménage.

PLAY READING ON PACKING-BOXES; PREPARING *ROSE MICHEL*

"During these domestic events, Palmer would come over often from his summer home near by. He would come in and sit on boxes, before we were unpacked, and listen to your father read aloud portions of *Rose Michel* as he finished them. Palmer was delighted with all of it, and that same autumn it was produced in New York with great success."

Preparations for this production of *Rose Michel* went forward in both Stamford and New York. The Union Square Theatre, where rehearsals took place, was then one of the foremost play-houses in America, having its own select stock company of very high repute. At the rehearsals the unprecedented appearance of a young author-director, with practical and philosophical ideas of his own in regard to the staging of his play, appears to have created a profound agitation of bewildered surprise mingled with some resentment, on the part of the established régime—as the following recollections of several persons who were present suggest.—Nym Crinkle wrote:

AN AMUSING "COLLISION"; A GUILD "CONVICTED OF UNLAWFULNESS"

"I saw MacKaye at one of the rehearsals of *Rose Michel*. He was acting as stage director. I sat for an hour in the dark parquette watching the collision. For that is what it was—and highly amusing!

"All the members of the company were experienced players, but they were all tied up with petty traditions and governed by small precedents. The rational method of the director annoyed and, I think, offended them a little. To be told that there was a right and a wrong way of doing anything was perhaps allowable, but to have the right way—which was not their way—*demonstrated and illustrated irrefragably*, was not calculated to make the director a favourite. But I could see that the director did not care to bother about the favouritisms of his position. . . . However, it is well known that some of them went privately to him afterward for lessons."

STUART ROBSON "IN THE PRESENCE OF A GREAT MASTER"

A significant annotation of this statement, later in date, is found in a letter of the noted comedian, Stuart Robson, who wrote to Steele MacKaye (May 3rd, 1881):

"When *Rose Michel* was produced at the Union Square Theatre, Mr. Stoddart achieved the success of the play, aided in no very small degree by your humble servant. We endeavoured to carry out *your*

instructions fully, and I think you will admit that we succeeded. *We each felt that we were in the presence of a great master in our own art*, and our heads were sufficiently level to take advantage of your knowledge. Believing so fully in you, is it a wonder that I now ask you to do a similar service for my daughter? Will you show her how to play *Viola*? I am willing to pay liberally for your time, which I know is valuable. Do this big favour for a small actor's daughter!"

"WILLIE" SEYMOUR REMINISCES—FIFTY YEARS AFTER

A still later retrospect is the following: William Seymour—now known and well-beloved throughout the American theatre as an expert, resourceful veteran in stage producing—was then "Willie," prompter and lad-of-all-work for A. M. Palmer. Fifty years afterwards (in March, 1925) at the Players Club, New York, he detailed to me, with amazing minutiae and precision, some recollections of my father at that time. Concerning these he wrote me soon afterwards:

"I was a very young man—just twenty—when I first knew your father, and experienced the wonderful associations while I had the honour and advantage of being with him. Of my visits to his home at Stamford, for Mr. A. M. Palmer, I recall the charming hospitality of your mother, and the children running about the house.

"WONDERFUL GENIUS IN DIRECTING"; COMPARISON
WITH AUGUSTIN DALY

"During the rehearsals of *Rose Michel* which your father conducted at the Union Square Theatre, I can almost feel now the thrill of enthusiasm that was always with him—and in his work. He was—shall I say, erratic, or eccentric? He was easily excited, and, in his directing, readily carried away by his earnestness and eagerness to impart a little—if not all—of his wonderful genius to those whom he was directing.

"While *Rose Michel* was being rehearsed by day at the Union Square, a brief revival of Boucicault's *Led Astray* was being performed there at night, while his play *The Shaughran* was running at Wallack's. During those rehearsals, your father had one or two 'run-ins' with Charlie Thorne (who acted *Count de Verney* in *Rose Michel*), but these were just friendly clashes of temperament. Alfred Ayres, the then famous orthoepist, an admirer of your father, was often present, making notes and offering suggestions upon matters of diction.

"In their manner of conducting rehearsals, Steele MacKaye and Augustin Daly seemed to me much alike in their personalities and directing powers. But I can say that your father was a better actor than Augustin Daly was, or ever tried to be. Daly was less excitable and, at times, a bit awkward in movement and gesture: both had in common a certain compelling gentlemanliness.

MACKAYE ACTS *PIERRE MICHEL*; ALFRED AYRES;
SIDNEY ROSENFELD'S BURLESQUE; *ROSE MICHEL* IN GERMAN

"Your father once acted *Pierre Michel* for two Thanksgiving (holiday) performances which we gave in Newark, N. J., while the regular Union Square Company were acting it in New York. The Newark cast was a picked-up one, in which Alfred Ayres acted *Baron de Bellevie*, and I acted Stuart Robson's part of *Moulinet*, which I also played in Philadelphia.

"*Rose Michel* was a great success, both in New York and on the road. In May, '76, it was performed at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, by the Union Square Company; and the following season, '77, it was also played there by another 'picked-up' company, and I was 'loaned' by Mr. Palmer to direct the play and act *Moulinet*. Sidney Rosenfeld wrote a burlesque of the play, in 1876, at the old Standard Theatre. *Rose Michel* was acted very successfully at the old California Theatre, in San Francisco (which Lawrence Barrett had opened in 1867, with John McCullough, and where Tom Keene made his rise to fortune). Also, in '76, *Rose Michel* was acted in German at the Stadt Theater, New York, where I was sent by Mr. Palmer to drill the German actors.

"Your father was always an enthusiast—full of brilliant schemes and ideas. I should be proud to add a leaf to the wreath of his memory."

SECRET REQUEST: DRAMATISING BRET HARTE

The intensiveness of MacKaye's training in adaptive playwriting at this time is attested by the request conveyed by this letter to him from Palmer, dated at the Union Square Theatre, Nov. 26th, 1875:

"I send you by the hand of Mr. Seymour a copy (privately printed) of Bret Harte's new story *Gabriel Conroy*. I want you to read it through carefully and return it to me early Monday morning with an answer to this question—Do you think you could make a drama out of it? All this I must ask you to keep in the *strictest confidence*. Do not let even Mr. Pritchard know about it, for it is not known to *any one* that I have sent it to you, and I do not wish it known. In order to secure greater secrecy about it, I send it by the hand of Mr. Seymour. He will tell you about our houses yesterday. Yours in haste."

Mr. Seymour has told me that he remembers taking this book of Bret Harte's in printer's proof-sheets to my father at Stamford.

"However," he writes me, "as far as I know, it was never dramatised, or—if completed—never produced. Bret Harte spent a summer at Cohasset writing for Palmer a dramatisation of his story, *Two Men*

of *Sandy Bar*,* produced with Robson as *Col. Starbottle*. As this production was a failure, it may well have caused Palmer to drop his plans for producing *Gabriel Conroy*."

Before its production, however, Stuart Robson, evidently considered Bret Harte's dramatisation of *Sandy Bar* unstageworthy as done by Harte, and desired my father to reconstruct it, for a year later he wrote my father the following letter, from "Troy, N. Y., Dec. 19, 1876":

"My dear Mr. MacKaye: I shall attempt to reconstruct *Sandy Bar* myself. I should like you to do it very much, knowing as I do what a great play you could make of it, but my purse is too lean for me to indulge in such a luxury, so it's no use thinking about that.

"I hear that your version of *Danicheff* † will be played at the Square, and that you exhibit some of your best work in it. I am truly glad of this, for I believe truly that your road is clear now, and that even the 'small critics' will be shortly compelled to own you—as the intelligent members of our profession have already done—as the first of American dramatists.—Always truly yours,—*Stuart Robson*."

Stuart Robson, who was afterwards to make (with William H. Crane) a notable success in Bronson Howard's *The Henrietta*, had, in 1875, first met Steele MacKaye, to whom he became warmly devoted, starring fifteen years later in his play *An Arrant Knave*. In *Rose Michel* he acted the part of a servant, *Moulinet*, called "Sneezer" ‡ (a droll character conceived and introduced into the plot by my father), in which he made a hit, with a "serenade" (written by my mother) sung to his dog, a little mongrel named Pollywog. In a later production of the play at the Boston Museum, this part of *Moulinet* was acted by William Warren.

* *The Two Men of Sandy Bar*, by Bret Harte, was first produced Aug. 28, 1876, at the Union Square Theatre, where Wm. Seymour directed rehearsals. This was followed, Oct. 2, '76, by a revival of *The Two Orphans*, with James O'Neill as *Pierre*, the cripple—a part acted, twelve years later, by Steele MacKaye's son, William Payson MacKaye. Cf. Index.

† *The Danicheffs*, preserved among my father's Mss., was first produced at the Union Square Theatre, Feb. 5, 1877, but without Steele MacKaye's name. It was an anonymous piece of adaptive work (rewritten from the French), done for A. M. Palmer by MacKaye at Stamford, where they were then neighbours. (At the Union Square it was rehearsed by William Seymour.) It was performed at San Francisco, in 1878, and at the Boston Museum in 1879. Cf. i, 266.

‡ William Seymour writes me: "'Sneezer' was a nickname bestowed, in the play, upon *Moulinet* by his master, *Pierre Michel*, because every time he (*Moulinet*) was startled—he sneezed. Our Union Square *Pollywog* was a reprobate of a little cur." Cf. *Pollywog's* "moving picture" in the photograph of Stuart Robson, in this chapter.

ROSE MICHEL: A STRONG SUCCESS, IMMEDIATE AND LASTING

The opening night of *Rose Michel* took place at the Union Square Theatre, Nov. 23, 1875, where the play and production were received with great favour. One of the many reviews commented:

"A failure in Paris and London, the credit of its great success in New York is supposed to be due in about equal parts to the merit of Mr. MacKaye's adaptation and his stage direction of the play, the liberality of the manager in mounting it, and the skill of the actors in the Union Square Theatre."

Rose Michel ran the rest of that autumn and all winter to crowded houses. On February 4, 1876, Rose Eytinge received a benefit. On March 18th, the play closed its season, after its one hundred and twelfth consecutive performance. In its subsequent successful career, it was performed in all parts of America and is still occasionally acted in stock.

MacKaye had thus made an auspicious beginning as a playwright, still in the process of learning an adaptive craftsmanship, through direct personal touch with the theatre itself, in the techniques of stage production and management. Within eighteen months of his return from London, he now found himself happily launched with a strong financial and artistic success to his credit.

CHAPTER IX

"CO-ORDINATING IDEAS"

New York, Stamford, Dublin, N. H., on Tour

Feb., 1876–Aug., '77

A NEW PERIOD: VARIED ELEMENTS, IN GROWTH TOWARDS A FOCUS

DURING THE NEXT FOUR YEARS MACKAYE HAD HIS RESIDENCE AT Stamford, Conn., with a working studio in New York (still standing) at 23 Union Square. He also travelled on tours and spent portions of three summers at Dublin, New Hampshire.

These four years were packed with significant activities, all tending to bring the "unco-ordinated ideas" of his early manhood to a balance of co-ordination, which was to have its first focus (1880-'81) in a brief but notable régime of the theatre's art, held under MacKaye's directorship in a theatre of his own conception and organisation. This gradual co-ordinating process took its rise from a variety of experiments and achievements, in dramaturgy, acting, teaching, lecturing, invention and theatre-building.

In these activities he found associations of work and friendship with outstanding leaders of the theatrical profession in America—Boucicault, Wallack, Booth, Jefferson, Montague, Barrett, McCullough, etc.—contacts which matured and increased the measure of his own growth as a dramatist and producer. Meantime, through his lectures and teaching, his magnetic personality impressed its influence upon far-flung audiences throughout the states—a strong, colourful figure, who became in his time—as David Belasco (later his assistant) has described him—"a national institution."

QUEEN AND WOMAN: VICTOR HUGO "MAGNIFICENTLY STAGED"

Immediately after launching his *Rose Michel*, MacKaye had in the offing another completed play—his collaboration with J. V. Pritchard, *Queen and Woman*, which he was soon rehearsing for a brief production in Brooklyn. In this he himself acted the part of *Simon Renard*. Under the management of Shook and Palmer, *Queen and Woman* opened at the Brooklyn Theatre, Feb. 13, 1876, for a week's run, extended to a fortnight.

The plot was derived from Victor Hugo. In the cast were Frederick Robinson, Edward Arnott, P. Fraser Coulter, John Mathews, Ida Vernon, Kate Claxton, and Laura Thorpe. Of these proficient players, one of the most admirable—Mr. Fraser Coulter

—still holds the boards after half a century, acting (in 1927) with all his old deft vitality and charm.

“*Queen and Woman*,” commented The American, “is a magnificent romantic drama—placed upon the stage with a completeness and beauty that must have surprised the Brooklynites. Mr. MacKaye was admirably tuned to the rôle of the subtle, sinuous, relentless avenger. His enunciation is melodious, and very accurate. Every look, every gesture, every accent has a definite purpose and meaning. . . . In New York *Queen and Woman* would probably have a long run.”

Of MacKaye’s acting The Brooklyn Review did not express so favourable an opinion:

“Mr. MacKaye—whom we know as a man of genius, a scholar and a theorist of art—is not, in our opinion, a successful actor. He is fitted to be of great service to the drama—but not as one of its histrionic representatives.”

SONG BY GOUNOD; KATE CLAXTON; MACKAYE—“THE DEVIL HIMSELF”

“*Queen and Woman*,” wrote the Brooklyn Sunday Sun (Feb. 20), “has proved so successful at the Brooklyn Theatre that the engagement there of Miss Clara Morris has been postponed for one week.

“Mr. MacKaye and Mr. Pritchard have presented a fine play of the melodramatic order, every personage of which is a distinct character.—The fair hair and pretty face of Miss Claxton, the picturesque dress of Mr. Robinson, the peaked face and sinister looks of Mr. MacKaye—recall *Marguerite*, *Faust* and the *Devil* himself. . . . Magnificently staged, in keeping with the moods of Hugo, the scenery is grand, realistic and picturesque. . . . Mr. Edward Arnott, as *Fabio Fabiani*, nightly captivates the house by his rendering of a tenor serenade, written specially for the play by M. Gounod, composer of *Faust*.”

This serenade song was contributed by the famous composer as a token of friendship for MacKaye, whose sister Emily (Baroness von Hesse) was a gifted singer, whom Gounod himself had accompanied at the piano in English drawing-rooms.

Queen and Woman, at the Brooklyn Theatre, was distinctly a success. Its too sumptuous production, however, appears to have rendered it impractical for “road” purposes, and its run was not continued elsewhere.

NYM CRINKLE COLLABORATES; WALLACK “ADOPTS ‘TWIN’S’”

A prolific commentator upon my father’s public career, from its beginning till its close—often his champion, sometimes his tart

opponent, always a warm-hearted and high-humoured critic—was A. C. Wheeler, “Nym Crinkle.” For twenty-five years he was one of the most brilliant of New York’s dramatic critics, writing at different periods for the Sun, the Herald and the World. As a boy I knew him, and I recall his lank figure, his erratic, whimsical humour, with its paradoxical leanings toward the mystic and occult, his intellectual tilting and comradely intensity in his talks with my parents and groups of friends in our home.

At this earlier period, he collaborated with my father in a play, called *Twins*, visiting him for a week at Stamford, early in 1876, to confer on the work, which Lester Wallack had accepted for production in New York, at his own theatre. In January MacKaye had negotiated with R. M. Field, manager of the Boston Museum, in regard to the play’s appearance there (as well as—probably—*Queen and Woman*, then in rehearsal), concerning which Field wrote to him (Jan. 29, ’76):

“I enclose a list of company as requested. I shall be gratified with any and all material that you may be able to furnish me, and am particularly desirous of making the acquaintance of the *Twins*, whom Mr. Wallack has adopted.”

DRAMATIC CRITIC AS PLAYWRIGHT: “BROTHER CRITIC IN THE PILLORY”

On April 12, 1876, “*Twins*—a new comedy by A. C. Wheeler and J. Steele MacKaye”—opened at Wallack’s Theatre, with an excellent cast, including John Gilbert, Charles A. Stevenson and E. M. Holland. Lester Wallack himself acted the double-part of the *Twins*, *Chester* and *Mark Delafeld*.

This was probably the first occasion when a prominent dramatic critic had dared to run the gauntlet of his critical fraternity by assuming the rôle of playwright, as co-author in a professional production. As a result, Wheeler’s professional “brethren” appear to have converted their ink and quills to tar and feathers for their colleague, in retaliation for his too-searching banter of their own critical shortcomings, as well as for his too-frequent championship of his new playwright “colleague,” MacKaye—if one may judge by allusions in a letter to the Editor of the World,* which is the only printed comment concerning this play preserved to the biographer’s use. The following are some excerpts:

* The letter is captioned, “‘Twins.’—Views of One Who Has Seen the Play and Liked It,” and is signed “William Henry Goodyear.”

“Sir: On Monday evening I saw *Twins*, now taken off the stage at Wallack’s, and was very much surprised to find myself, with the rest of the audience, greeting almost every sentence through many scenes with spontaneous applause. I was surprised because, having read two criticisms of the opening night and one or two ‘personal’ squibs, I had gone to it from a rather morbid psychologic interest in a play that was damned. . . . Yet to damn *Twins* with faint praise is an inequality of criticism which can only be explained by remembering that a brother critic is in the pillory. . . .

“BRILLIANT DIALOGUE”: “THE BEGINNING OF GOOD
AND TRUE AMERICAN ART”

“The dialogue is brilliant, and it is in *English*. There has been none such in any new play on the New York stage. *Twins* is not a *piece* like *The Gilded Age*, where we pardon a thousand inanities for the sake of the single actor; not a realistic presentation of American life, depending on its frivolity for its success, like Howard’s *Saratoga*. The play is not an attack upon the woman of the future, but it is an attack upon the woman *becoming* the woman of the future. . . . Thus *Twins* is truly an American play, for only in this country have women a position in which they could involve themselves, as Mrs. Delafield, in financial speculation independent of the husband. . . . American plays with an idea to back them are not so common that we can afford to flout this one. . . . This play is an event; it is the beginning of good and true American art; its plot is a marvel of probability, dash and vigour. Might it not have run over two weeks? If Montague had played the young lover, might not the receipts have been swelled by those unswerving devotees who ask for Montague and him only?

“Yet this play has afforded Lester Wallack the opportunity for incomparable acting. There is wonderful self-suppression in his conception of the second character. The natural tendency would be to emphasise the difference between the brothers. Wallack does not. He convinces us that he is the other brother by not trying to. . . . Such is the condition of the play’s greatness. In a story we could not realise the existence of such deception; in the play we are not deceived—we are satisfied by the art of presentation. *If work like this—in playwrighting and acting—can pass unnoticed, what hope is there for art?*”

THREE PRODUCTIONS IN FIVE MONTHS; PRIVATE PUPILS

Twins closed its brief run on the 22nd of April.

Thus, at his start as an American dramatist, within five months MacKaye had achieved three productions. Of these, the first—an adaptation (remodelled to a new play) by himself alone—was an enduring success; the second and third, collaborations, were ephemeral “*succes d’estimes*.”

In Stamford, he had begun to give lessons in "Delsarte" to several private pupils * in our Stamford home, where the teaching went on in the midst of household distractions and professional work. Among his pupils elsewhere, Prof. Lewis B. Monroe, head of the School of Oratory of Boston University (18 Beacon St., Boston) was one of his most zealous friends. At this time Monroe had recently established his summer home at Dublin, New Hampshire, where he was known as the pioneering "Columbus" of that outer-world "city colony," which in after years—including the archeologist, Rafael Pumpelly, the artists, Abbott Thayer, George de Forest Brush, George Grey Barnard, Eric Pape, the writers, T. W. Higginson, Mark Twain, Amy Lowell, etc.—has made famous that superb region of wild nature about the lake at the foot of Monadnock Mountain.

DUBLIN, N. H.; *CAST ADRIFT*; NAMING THE FIRST HAZEL

Here, on a site of rugged grandeur, Prof. and Mrs. Monroe, with their daughters, lived in an old square-built farmhouse, north of the lake; and here—to continue his studies with my father—Prof. Monroe invited the MacKaye family to visit the Monroe household for the months of August and September, '76.

The journey from Stamford, Conn., was then a fairly arduous adventure, in the course of which—after reaching Keene, N. H., by train—on the long, mountainous drive, through a starless night, the horses plunged accidentally into the southwest end of Dublin Lake. There this biographer, at the age of sixteen months, was rescued from the roiled waters by a bearded native, who appeared with one hand swinging a whale-oil lantern, with the other holding one ear in cogent inquiry—none other than the locally long-famed ear of "deef" George W. Gleason, for sixty years postmaster and major-domo of Dublin village. Through this Mr. Gleason, my father was offered, that summer, a farm of several hundred acres, including one-third of the lake's north shore, to be bought outright for five hundred dollars: property which to-day could not be bought for half a million. "But how could I ever live here!" exclaimed my father. "This place is divinely beautiful—but too utterly unget-at-able to invest in."

During this summer visit, in serene, congenial surroundings, my father wrote the earliest version of his most celebrated play, which

* Among these pupils, besides Alger and Monroe (who came on from Boston for lessons), were Miss Ida Vernon, of the Union Square Theatre Company, and Miss Beatrice Stafford, introduced by Frank B. Carpenter. Cf. Appendix.

afterwards he named *Hazel Kirke*, but at that time called *Cast Adrift*. My mother has related to her children how he came to hit upon the name of *Hazel*—then probably used for the first time as a girl’s surname—which in after-generations was to christen a whole continent of Hazels, unconscious of their names’ origination. Speaking of my father, she said to us:

“He was then absorbed in writing his play, but had found as yet no name that appealed to him for his heroine. He used to sit writing in the little summer-house (still standing), on the slope not far from the Monroe’s rustic porch, which—by the way—he designed that summer. . . . One day—it was a golden afternoon, early in autumn—some of you children and I came down from the woods, bringing in our arms sprays of ripe hazel boughs, and stopped at the summer house to give some of the nuts to your father. He looked up from his manuscript, and gazed hard for a moment at the little nuts and the bright sprays. Then he gave a sudden exclamation; ‘Hazel! By Jove, Molly!’—Why not? That’s just the name for her—so fresh and new—Hazel: I don’t believe it’s ever been used for a girl before. But now you and the boys have christened her: So *Hazel* she shall be, in my new play.’”

EARLIEST SKETCH *HAZEL KIRKE*: “HUMAN PASSIONS AND THE POETS”

Before leaving Dublin that fall, he had completed the first two acts of his new play *Cast Adrift*. Some of the names of the play-characters are different from those in the final version. He also drafted a lecture on “The Human Passions,” in which he wrote:

“The most terrible and fated battle in life is the one we wage with the passional powers in our own breasts; and our most immortal victory or defeat is the one we gain or suffer there. Then welcome any light which can help us to understand, and inspire us to conquer the great emotional forces of our souls!

“The poets are among the greatest benefactors of mankind, because they bring us this light and inspiration in the most winning and persuasive forms. They are the great Passion Painters of the Ages, the unconscious recorders of the people’s progress, the mathematical measurers of the race’s growth.”

That fall, just before the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia closed, he made a hurried trip there, with some of his family, to see the exhibits. There he was especially interested in those which showed the astonishing progress of inventions—presage of vaster revelations at the next great Exposition, seventeen years later: the World’s Fair at Chicago.

BROOKLYN THEATRE FIRE: INVENTIONS IN FIREPROOFING

In December of '76, my father barely escaped with his life from a terrible fire disaster which shocked the whole country—the burning of the Brooklyn Theatre with tragic loss of human lives: an event which stirred him to devote much time to the invention of various devices for fire-safety in theatres, used and perfected later in his own theatres and productions. Among these were his earliest experiments in fireproofing stage-scenery. Of this experience his friend, Edgar Stillman Kelley, the American composer, has written this account:

“A most startling tale was told to me by Steele MacKaye of the burning of the Brooklyn Theatre. He related how, in order to hear Kate Claxton in the *Two Orphans* (the house being sold out), he had obtained a seat among the musicians in the orchestra. Noticing that the border lights seemed unusually bright, he leaned over towards the stage and perceived a long flame high above the curtain. Retaining his presence of mind, he stepped over the rail, and proceeded quietly up the aisle to notify the ushers to keep perfect order and dismiss the audience at once. But he was anticipated by a yell from somewhere, and an uproar ensued in which he soon found himself without a coat.

“‘In an instant,’ said he, ‘an insidious, stifling gas penetrated our lungs, creating a mad desire for air and freedom, and a struggle for animal existence forced the weaker to the wall. Once outside, breathing freely, the illusion passed and we returned to the rescue work. Not until next day did we learn the appalling extent of the catastrophe.’—As MacKaye was a rare combination of the artistic temperament and the practical inventor, *one of the direct results of this experience was his invention of processes to fireproof scenery, as well as his folding safety-seats for theatres.*”

DEATH OF “SAIDIE MCKAYE”; TRIBUTES: GILDER, LONGFELLOW, ETC.

During that autumn, the shadow of death again cast on my father a poignant sorrow. His sister and radiant twin-spirit, Saidie McKaye (Warner *) was lying very ill at her home, 39 East 19th Street, New York, where she died (Dec. 3, 1876) at the age of thirty-six. Her spiritual comradeship with her brother was so intimately a part of his life while she lived, and her own life so quickened a significant coterie of that epoch, that I shall here touch upon some associations and commentaries, which cite her own creatively artistic nature, in whose characteristics my father so kindredly shared.

In a memorial volume to her, including “Tributes of her Friends and Selections from her Writings,” are comments in verse and

* Cf. footnote on page 81.

prose by Richard Watson Gilder, Samuel Longfellow, James Freeman Clarke, O. B. Frothingham, Mattie Griffith Browne, T. Frank Brownell, Titus Munson Coan, Alfred H. Louis, and others.

This Alfred H. Louis is worthy of more extensive comment, if only for the fact that his gifted erratic personality, in its outward ruin of shabby-genteel old age, was the suggestive original for the title rôle of *Captain Craig*, that early and extraordinary poem of human portraiture by Edwin Arlington Robinson. My friend Robinson himself has told me that, when he was living at Harlem, in a poet's indigence, during the late 1880's, he met Alfred Louis at the home of Titus Coan, then an aged litterateur who, to eke out a sparse existence, rewrote manuscripts for authors. Fifteen years earlier, these scholarly cronies—with Gilder, Bryant, the Cary sisters, R. H. Stoddard, Bayard Taylor and others—had been literary “lights” of my aunt Mrs. Warner's salon in 19th Street; and from these two, later, Robinson caught some of their remembered enthusiasm for her personal gifts.

In England, before the Civil War, Alfred H. Louis, graduate of Trinity College, a brilliant Jew and mystic, had been a protégé of Rothschild, but, on becoming a Roman Catholic, had fallen from that favour and had left London for New York, in poverty. There for many years he spent his bachelor's life in haunting the Astor library and a few literary circles of New York, returning in old age to die in London, destitute.

“CAPTAIN CRAIG” QUOTES DAMROSCH: “A GREAT WOMAN COMPOSER”

Of amazing erudition, culture and mentality, utterly oblivious of his own tattered, dishevelled exterior, this “Captain Craig” Louis had a high sensibility, akin to genius, in assaying the subtle tragic implications of human paradox, as well as the function of humour in personal character. In the volume, commemorative of Saidie McKaye, he wrote of her:

“The scope of her nature embraced, in an implicit unity, all the various sides of artistic endeavour. And she was endowed with one rare power—*humour*—which can play in a sovereign manner with the facts and tendencies of life as from a sphere of a higher but a loving superiority. . . . Her songs,* her short but profound pieces composed

* A book of her musical compositions was privately printed, in 1880. Of her writings her *Leaves from the Journal of a Poor Musician* appeared in Putnam's Magazine, July and August, 1868. Among her poems and prose, collected in her memorial volume, was a humouresque by her entitled *The Poets on the Alabama Claims*, containing parodies of Tennyson, Browning and Walt Whitman, with the last of whom she was personally acquainted.

for the piano, but above all her improvisations on the instrument—when she would throw off in swift succession subjects and motives fit to be the material of the greatest work—all these proved her to belong, as no woman yet has belonged, to that so limited order of higher beings who stand on the highest level as creators in the art.

"One evening, at her home, I introduced to her one of the most eminent of living musicians, now resident in America—Leopold Damrosch, to whom I induced her to show and play her musical manuscripts. Impressed with the power and quality of her genius, before he left, he lifted her hand to his lips with sincerest homage, and said to her: 'Madam, I know probably every note of music that has hitherto been published by every woman who has published anything of consequence; and if I may judge by comparison, *you are the first woman who can, if you will it, become a truly great composer.*' . . .

"Goethe said that he had lived his poems before he wrote them. But what if you live them, with all their multiplied strain of emotion and thinking, yet never write them? Yet more: *What if it be your fate to live habitually in all the complex emotion of a conflict of arts for possession of your being, victory inclining now to one, now to another, with no prospect of cessation of the strife until the overloaded heart ceases to beat?—Can the imagination of man conceive of a spiritual tragedy deeper than this?* In view of it, can anything serve, more than the history of this gifted being, to impress more deeply upon our hearts the most refining and solemn of all truths—that what we call Death is the greatest of all God's gifts to Life? . . .

*"Great fitful being, undeciphered scroll!
Casket, filled full with gems, without a key!
Ship compassless upon uncharted sea,
By day no sun, by night an unstarred pole:
Well is it with thee; well, that thou art fled—
Made whole in Heaven, free among the dead!"*

She herself had written, in a letter to T. Frank Brownell*:

"The struggle of all the ages for improved conditions, this intuitive and profound aspiration of the soul, out of which temples and all forms of majestic and delicate beauty spring, these triumphant martyrdoms of men and women who have lived and died for a great idea—are they all but a mirage, a pompous scene shifting above the sand billows of a fruitless life?—*No, the human soul is not only fit to live, it is unfit to die.*"

"In her unworldly character," wrote James Freeman Clarke, "truth and honour spoke from her eye with a frank *camaraderie*. Thus all her friends became one another's friends—and there was never a circle into which fewer jealousies entered."

And Richard Watson Gilder wrote in her memory:

* Harvard, Class of 1865, and Secretary of the New York University Club.

“*Make me a summer song, for music meet,
And you shall hear it when you come again.
Let it be full of life
And sunshine and of flowers.*

“*Thus should it run’—she smiling spoke, and then
Struck the white keys and played a joyful tune:
’Twas winter, but I thought
The birds began to sing. . . .*

“*O friend,—dear friend! The winter has gone by
But still thy poet’s song will not be glad
While the bright flowers of June
Blossom above thy grave.”*

For Steele MacKaye, with the anxious suspense and bereavement caused by this illness and death of his sister, were now mingled contrasted hopes and duties arising from a newly consummated connection—his professional association with Dion Boucicault as Boucicault’s personal representative. This association lasted for about six months. It had begun the summer before, when MacKaye—on a trip from Dublin to his Stamford home—received from Lester Wallack the following note, written August 28th from his Stamford residence:

“Dear Mr. MacKaye—Mr. Boucicault comes here to-morrow, partly for the pleasure of meeting you.—Can you conveniently come here at ½ past two P. M. We want to talk over matters and, I hope, come to a conclusion satisfactory to all.”

This conference with manager and playwright had significant developments for MacKaye.

BOUCICAULT, “PLOT-SPINNER”; FIRST STAGING OF ARRAN ISLANDS

“It was at this period,” my mother has written to me, “that your father worked some with Boucicault. He helped him with some of his French adaptations, but this was confidential work.—Boucicault often said to your father: ‘MacKaye, I am not a dramatist, I am a playwright—a plot-spinner.’ *

“It was Boucicault, by the way, who urged upon him to drop the ‘J.’ in his name; for your father used often to sign his name, *J. Steele MacKaye*—‘For heaven’s sake,’ Boucicault said to him, ‘don’t part your name in the middle! *Steele MacKaye* is a fine name. Stick to that for your stage name, at least.’ And so your father did.”

* Concerning his play, *The Poor of Liverpool*, Boucicault wrote (in 1864): “I can spin out these rough-and-tumble dramas as a hen lays eggs.”

No public memories are as fleeting and fickle as those connected with the stage. To-day, for the average playgoer, the renown of Dion Boucicault, Irish-and-American actor and playwright—once, in the memory of “old stagers,” still living, as brilliant as that of a John Barrymore and a George Cohan combined—is now reduced to the shadow of a shadow. To-day, even to the well-informed enthusiast for Ireland and the Irish drama of Synge, it is wholly forgotten that in 1883 (Feb. 5th), at the Boston Museum, *a sombre Irish play* (*The Amadan*, by Boucicault) *depicted for the first time on any stage a scene of the Arran Islands*—“the ‘puffing hole’ of a wild sea cave.” “The scene,” writes Boucicault’s chronicler, Townsend Walsh,* “was amazing in its illusion, like a Rembrandt. It will live in the memory of all who saw the play.”

Yet, despite the present-day ignorance of theatre history on the part of Broadway “fans,” a new study of our American stage background in the universities, schools and dramatic societies, is already beginning a new theatrical culture, with wider diffusion of better knowledge, which will inevitably lead to a juster perspective upon present and future achievements of our theatre. To this new generation is due a brief reference here to the significant personality and record of Dion Boucicault, who, in 1876, in his fifty-seventh year, chose as his working associate Steele MacKaye, rising American dramatist of thirty-four.

“HE LIVED LIKE A PRINCE AND DIED WORTH A SHILLING”

Steele MacKaye’s nature had basic contrasts with Boucicault’s. He had an unswerving high seriousness of purpose and refusal of all compromise entirely at odds with Boucicault’s quick gifts for opportunism. Yet temperamentally the two had a good deal in common; and in the following description by Walsh of Boucicault’s personal traits and career, there are strong elements of resemblance to those of MacKaye himself:

“Boucicault’s good fellowship, his profligate generosity, his magnificent recklessness are not yet cold in the memory of those who still speak with dazed wonder of the strange career and the stranger endowment of this extraordinary man, who said of himself: ‘I wish I deserved such an epitaph as this: *He lived like a prince and died worth*

* In *The Career of Dion Boucicault*, New York, the Dunlap Society, 1915. For a most entertaining epitome of Boucicault’s total career the reader is referred to this volume by Townsend Walsh, his ardent admirer, whose attractive and informing book deserves a far wider circulation than the limited edition of the Dunlap Society permits.

a shilling, owing no man a penny, but leaving a record in smiles and good humour. So do not shed a tear over him who never intentionally caused one to flow.’”

Born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1820, Boucicault himself once related, in print, this amusing anecdote of his boyhood:

“At fourteen I was removed from Hessey’s school to the London University. One day, the Latin class was waiting for the arrival of our master, a fiery, vehement, red-haired German, named Rainbach. I crept up to the blackboard on which the master used to write, in English, verse which we were called on to translate as an exercise into Latin metre, and wrote in bold, chalk letters:

*‘Rainbach was fiery and hot,
Irascible and proudish;
His mother was a mustard pot
And his father a horseradish.*

The gentlemen will please put that in iambics.’”

Himself “irascible and proudish,” these characteristics of humour, dash and insubordination led Boucicault to an early fondness for the vagabondage of the English theatre, in which he became an actor of small parts, from which he rose, by quick powers of adaptation and perseverance, to become the chief impersonator in plays of his own writing. The play of his which brought him his first large repute, at the age of twenty-one, was *London Assurance*, first produced in London, March 4, 1841, and in New York, in October of that year, with Charlotte Cushman as *Lady Gay Spanker*.

During the next thirty-five years, his career in England and America was crowded with as many productions of his own plays, in most of which he acted with Agnes Robertson, his wife.

Sept. 14, 1859, at New York, he produced with William Stuart his adaptation of Dickens’ *The Cricket on the Hearth*, Joseph Jefferson acting *Caleb Plummer*. On Dec. 8th of that year, seven days after John Brown’s death, he produced his play of American Southern life, *The Octoroon*, amid enormous popular excitement. . . . April 1, 1861, Boucicault—with Agnes Robertson—appeared in his play of the Irish peasantry, *The Colleen Bawn*, in Dublin, Ireland, at the old Theatre Royal, achieving great success and social prestige.—*This was forty-four years before the opening of the Abbey Theatre, which launched in Dublin the Irish folk-plays of Yeats and Synge.*

Sept. 4, 1865, at London, was first produced Boucicault’s version of *Rip Van Winkle*, in which Joseph Jefferson afterwards acted for two generations. Nov. 14, 1874, Boucicault appeared in the first production of his play, *The Shaughraun*, at Wallack’s Theatre, with

H. J. Montague as *Captain Molineux*. Boucicault had introduced Montague to Lester Wallack, and wrote the part of *Molineux* especially for him.—*This was shortly after Montague's first landing in America, where he had come on impulse at Steele MacKaye's suggestion, expecting "to stay perhaps a fortnight."* *

This Irish play was an immense success. From it Boucicault earned a quick fortune of \$500,000, which as quickly he squandered.—“*After 'The Shaughraun,' (writes Walsh), his reputation declined.*”

THE SHAUGHRAUN: HIS PEAK OF RENOWN: THREE LEADERS CONFER

It was, then, near this peak of Boucicault's renown, during its quick descent in fortune towards a gradually waning repute, that Steele MacKaye first met him, by Wallack's invitation.

Lester Wallack (born in New York City, Jan. 1, 1820) was the same age as Boucicault, twenty-two years older than Steele MacKaye, who was but five years old when Wallack made his stage début (Sept. 27, 1847). Lester's famous father, James William Wallack (“Wallack the Elder”), born in England, had in 1852 taken control of Brougham's Lyceum, New York (Broadway and Broome St.) and named it “Wallack's Theatre.” On Sept. 25, 1861 (the first year of Lincoln's Presidency), with his son Lester as his assistant, he opened his second Wallack's Theatre (N. E. corner of Broadway and 13th Street), with *The New President*, a play by Tom Taylor. After the elder Wallack's death, on Christmas day, 1864, Lester Wallack continued the management of that theatre, which is the one referred to in events of this chapter.

A brilliant actor-manager, a warm personality well beloved by his fellow professionals and the public, Lester Wallack was occasionally a playwright—the author of one enormously popular success, *Rosedale*, widely acted during two generations. Wafted down from the footlights of this play, with its gipsy theme, still lingers the haunting melody of the old English ballad, long sung throughout the land, beginning:

“*Lord Bateman was a noble lord,
A noble lord was he of high degree,
And he determinéd to go abroad—
To go far countrees for to see.*”

On that August day at Stamford, in '76, the meeting between these two theatre veterans, Wallack and Boucicault, and the young protagonist of this memoir was productive of mutually friendly relations in theatrical work.

* Cf. i, 230, and Montague's letter to MacKaye, in Appendix.

“We want,” wrote Wallack to MacKaye, “to talk over matters and, I hope, come to a conclusion satisfactory to all.”

WALLACK, BOUCICAULT AND MACKAYE, ASSOCIATES: A NEW COMEDY

The conclusion arrived at appears to have developed into a three-party business arrangement, whereby MacKaye was to divide his services between Wallack and Boucicault—toward Wallack, as a member of the Wallack’s Theatre company, to act in special productions; towards Boucicault, as his personal representative, to direct Boucicault’s plays (French adaptations, contracted for Wallack’s Theatre), assisting him in their revision, and in the preparation of their printed prompt copies, as well as to attend to various business affairs, in Boucicault’s stead.

During the autumn and December of ’76, as we have seen, MacKaye was undergoing keen personal sorrow and bereavement; he was also under great strain of financial worry. Under both these stresses Boucicault expressed to him warm-hearted fellowship: “When you did not ask me for sympathy,” Boucicault wrote to him later, “I gave it—gave it freely.” For the ancestral Celt found common lodgment in these two men, far wandered in descent from the hills of Scotland and Erin.

“My dear Son!” once wrote old Col. McKaye to his incorrigible scion: “You have no Irish blood in your veins that I know of. Why is it, then, that you should persist in repudiating all of a Scotchman’s foresight of future consequences, to live in all an Irishman’s heedlessness of them?”

In this bewildered query, however, the good Colonel had evidently forgotten that “foresightly” MacKay, the old Scotch seer of Rhinns, whose magic purse bore the motto: “*As long as you draw out of me, I will let you have, but if you return a coin I cease to yield.*” Also he had ignored that highland *MacAoidh*, whose dagger struck off his own hand with an impetuous foresight—beyond heed of immediate consequences to himself. So Steele MacKaye was ever in motive “the r-r-real MacKí”—a blend of Saxon and Gael, wherein the Scotch Gaelic fire kindled instantly to an ancient kinship of temperament such as flared from the Irish heart of Boucicault, in their association.

BOUCICAULT AND MACKAYE—CAPTAINS ABSOLUTE

The two dramatists were, then, heartily fond of each other; yet as each was a born leader, dominant—however affectionately—over

his fellows, their association, as lord and lieutenant, was necessarily brief. Since "Boucicault (in the words of Townsend Walsh) always endeavoured to obtain the absolute direction of affairs," and since MacKaye always "would rather be captain than mate," the conclusion of the relations between these *Captains Absolute* was foregone.

"Steele MacKaye," said David Belasco,* "was a personality who swept the rock of Gibraltar away, wherever he went." Boucicault, though a rock of eminence, was not one to welcome submersion by such a tidal wave.

In January, '77, Boucicault went on a "road" trip, including Baltimore, Washington and Pittsburgh. On this trip he was hastily finishing a new French adaptation for Wallack's. While he was starting "on the road," my father was very busy at Wallack's Theatre, with final rehearsals of a play called *All for Her*, in which he acted the leading juvenile part. The play opened two days after the date of the following letter ("20 E. 15th St., 20 Jan., 1877") from Boucicault to Messrs. Drexel, Morgan and Co.:

"Dear Sir: As Mr. Steele MacKaye will transact business for me in my absence, that may involve some money matters, I introduce him to your recognition.—Yours truly, *Dion Boucicault.*"

On Jan. 25th, '77, Boucicault wrote to MacKaye from Baltimore. By that date, *All for Her* had been produced and found unsuccessful; whereupon Wallack and Montague were calling upon Boucicault (probably by telegraph) to rush the completion of his new play for immediate production at Wallack's Theatre. At this Boucicault wrote to MacKaye in annoyance:

"Messrs. Wallack and Montague must moderate the loudness of their call! If '*All for H.*' had been as great a success as it has been a failure, they would have turned their back on my play, and all my work would have been set aside unconsidered. My piece must not be hurried out to cover up the mistake—the costly mistake I would have prevented.

"I hope to have my piece in—by the 10th Feb.—not a day before. Will send on the acts as I can—but will send every line through you. *These folk must learn to regard you as important.*—You must read the play in the green room to the company and carry my instructions on the stage."

From these words, underlined by Boucicault, the elder dramatist's complete confidence in young MacKaye's powers as a stage direc-

* In the interview with Percy MacKaye, April 7, 1925. Cf. pages i, 374, 443; ii, 55-56.

tor is evident, as well as his solicitude to espouse the personal importance of his representative. On Jan. 29, from Baltimore, he wrote again to MacKaye, this time expressing exasperation with Manager A. M. Palmer:

“COLLECT MY WRETCHED FEES FROM PALMER”; “FRANK ADVICE—
AND BROTHERLY FEELING”

“Mr. Palmer took my play *Led Astray* * and played it in defiance of my objection—used it as a stop gap—doing its future attraction much injury—all in spite of my earnest remonstrance. He cannot now plead its failure to answer his purpose. I shall feel obliged, therefore, if you will collect the wretched fees—which he imposed on me. I do not think he requested any of his company to forego their salaries, because his enterprise was not successful.

“I fear that his estimate of the literary part of the drama is so low—and he is so indifferent to authorship—that our contemplated relations have a very infirm basis. However—that is not the question now.

(Postscript) “You can read this to Palmer, if you like. Yours, D. B.”

The next day he wrote: “There is no part for you in the new play.—The acc/ books received—all right.—I have been very ill with a bad cold—scarcely able to see—feared I could not act last night, but worried thro’.—I fear that the life has gone out of Wallack’s theatre, and the public are slipping away.”

Evidently MacKaye had fully expected a part in the new play, and now wrote so to Boucicault, who answered (Jan. 31):

“I have received your letter. You ask me to be frank with you.—I shall be so.—I think Mr. Wallack appreciates you to the full—as I do—but you mistake: I did not say that you would have either the *father* or the *priest* in my comedy—on the contrary. When I read you a scene of *Moulinac’s*, you exclaimed ‘I could play that part’—but I fear I answered with unfeeling sharpness—‘You seem to desire to play everything. You must not pretend to every line. Find what you can do best and stick to that.’—The *priest* was written for Beckett—and I never dreamed of you playing such a part!

“Forgive my frankness—I should be sorry to wound the sensibilities of your eager mind. When you *did not* ask me for sympathy I gave it—gave it freely.—Now as freely I give you my frank and hearty opinion on your present complaint.—I think you are unjustified in it—and I hope you will accept that opinion as it is meant—in all kindness and brotherly feeling—appreciating your worth both in head and heart.” †

* Cf. “stop gap” production by Palmer of *Led Astray* on page i, 240.

† Two days later Boucicault wrote again to MacKaye: “‘Tout vient a qui sait attendre.’—Let that be your device. ‘I must be cruel only to be kind.’ That was mine when I wrote to you.”

"You seem to desire to play everything. You must not pretend to every line." Here, in this warm-hearted advice of age to youth, is a trenchant diagnosis of MacKaye as actor by Boucicault as dramatist.

In short, Boucicault desired MacKaye to specialise—to choose his "type" and "stick to that." But "that" is precisely what MacKaye, from the depths of his being, throughout his career, refused to do. He refused to be pigeonholed. He did very frankly "desire to play everything"—as comedian, tragedian, "light" and "heavy," old and young, "star" and "utility man"—the full gamut of life. (Later, in his own plays, he frequently did this, acting or understudying *all* the rôles he had created as dramatist.) He would specialise, yes, ardently; but only for the sake of more deeply learning the elements of a larger synthesis. His unappeasable idea was to co-ordinate his specialties in that rôle of all-round "Theatre Artist," which for him included within the scope of "theatre," the theatre's rightful leadership in human society.

The result, at this juncture, was soon an amicable parting of paths. A series of further letters from Boucicault to MacKaye, covering about a month of Boucicault's road tour, that winter, deals with the rather plodding business of errand-running—for printer's proofs, Pullman car tickets, etc., calling on MacKaye to expedite these errands in his "secretarial" capacity. As MacKaye himself had two secretaries at the time, to attend to his own teeming ménage of playwriting and teaching at Stamford, it is small wonder that sparks of a rising dismay flashed from the pen of Boucicault in this letter (from "Washington, Sat., Feb. 10,") to his unsubstantial "errand-boy" in New York:

"Your silence for the past few days has bothered me.—As a business formality, I like to have my letters acknowledged.—Amongst other matters I asked you about taking certain places in the Pullman car, leaving N. Y. for Pittsburgh on Sunday morning.—*No answer.*

"Then, finding that there was a more direct line via Balt. & Ohio R. R., I wired you to cancel my order on this subject.—*No answer.*

"I then find that the trains by Balt. & Ohio will not run after this week, so I am again flung back on the N. Y. route and I wire you again *not to cancel the order.*—*No answer.*

"Let your letters be as brief as you please, but pray be methodical. You led me to believe you were so.—If I do not hear from you before this evening, I must wire the head office in New York."

The response of MacKaye to this was apparently an expression of his reasons for wishing to bring their business association to a

close—a letter to which Boucicault, worn out with his road-trip and a bad cold, replied laconically:

“As you please.—I regret we cannot get on together.—Pardon me not answering yours sooner, but I have been bothered—worked, to death—and sick. One of these is bad enough, but the trinity is the devil!”

Thus concluded this brief and Gaelicly piquant association between two theatre leaders, each dominant in his own régime. And thus MacKaye, as “mate” of their only mutual enterprise, retired on perfectly friendly terms, with the determination of seeking to become “captain” elsewhere. This decision coincided with his retirement also from his business arrangement with Lester Wallack, whereby he had been briefly a member of the regular stock company at Wallack’s Theatre.

LEADING MAN AT WALLACK’S: MACKAYE, AS RADFORD

There, on Jan. 22, 1877, he had appeared in the leading “juvenile” rôle of *Richard Radford*, in the première of *All for Her*, a play by Palgrave Simpson and Herman Merivale,* in which Lester Wallack acted *Hugh Trevor*, and Charles A. Stevenson—*Maurice*.

The N. Y. Dramatic News observed: “MacKaye, who is an exceptionally good actor, distinguished himself prominently in the performance of *All for Her* at Wallack’s.”

“Steele MacKaye,” wrote another critic in the Philadelphia Item, “performed *Radford*, the spy, in *All for Her* so well that he completely eclipsed Wallack himself and made *Radford* the part of the piece.”

This something-too-auspicious beginning as leading juvenile of the oldest and foremost stock company in New York may well have been responsible for that united sudden call (alluded to in Boucicault’s letter, of Jan. 25th) on the part of Wallack and Montague for Boucicault to hurry for them his new play; for Montague—as reigning juvenile of the matinée idol’s “curl”—and Wallack, as regnant actor-manager, though both warm friends of MacKaye, might quite naturally not relish such reports of being “eclipsed” in their own régime, and would prefer a relationship with the erstwhile young London *Hamlet* in the rôle of dramatist rather than of actor.

* An Oxford professor and politician, Under-Secretary for India, 1859-74. The full cast of *All for Her* is given in Brown’s *History of the New York Stage*.

MACKAYE'S *DANICHEFFS* OPENS: WALLACK ACCEPTS HIS NEW PLAY

This is the more probable since a piece of anonymous craftsmanship of MacKaye as dramatist had just then made a decided hit at the Union Square Theatre in the first American production there of *The Danicheffs*, a play which (as we have seen *) MacKaye had recently adapted for Palmer from the French. This production—in which Charles R. Thorne, James O'Neill, J. H. Stoddart, John Parselle and John Mathews had effective parts—ran for three months (closing May 5, '77), and was later revived several times.† Accordingly, three days after the very successful opening of *The Danicheffs* at the Union Square, and five days after the failure and close of *All for Her* at Wallack's, Lester Wallack wrote the following note, Feb. 8, '77, from his home, at 13 W. 30th St.:

'My dear MacKaye—if you can come to my house to-morrow (Friday) at eleven o'clock, I will hear the first three acts of your comedy and sincerely hope something may be done about it.'

This comedy was my father's play *Won at Last*, which—though then still unfinished—Wallack thereupon accepted, and produced at his theatre, the following season, with H. J. Montague as its "leading juvenile."

Had *All for Her* succeeded at Wallack's, it is possible that MacKaye might have continued there longer as a member of the stock company. This, however, is unlikely, as he was entirely unfitted by temperament to remain a subordinate member of any ménage, however friendly the auspices. Moreover, he was increasingly urged—both from within and without—to respond to the call of leadership in that movement of æsthetic expression which he had so boldly initiated six years earlier. Through his intervening theatrical experience, he was now doubly impelled to this decision by his growing ideas of what the theatre itself might become, if by reform it could be related to the underlying laws of its own art.

MACKAYE'S SECOND "SCHOOL OF EXPRESSION," 23 UNION SQUARE

Consequently, with no less ardour than earlier, but now in maturer mood, he was engaged in establishing, at 23 Union Square, a School of Expression—his second venture of the kind. A glimpse of him in this new setting is thus given in a published article. ‡

* Cf. page i, 246. † Cf. Allston Brown's *History of the New York Stage*.

‡ *Spirit of the Times*, January 19, 1878.



MT. MONADNOCK AND LAKE MONADNOCK

View from Dublin, N. H., where "Hazel Kirke" was written by Steele MacKaye, 1876 (page 253).

During summers of 1874, '76, '77, '78 and '87, MacKaye and his family sojourned at Dublin, N. H. There, in '78, this caricature (drawn by Rev. Chas. Ward) depicts him spell-binding his friends (J. C. Williamson, etc.) with a fish-story: "The Legend of Burphy's Preserve" (page 285).

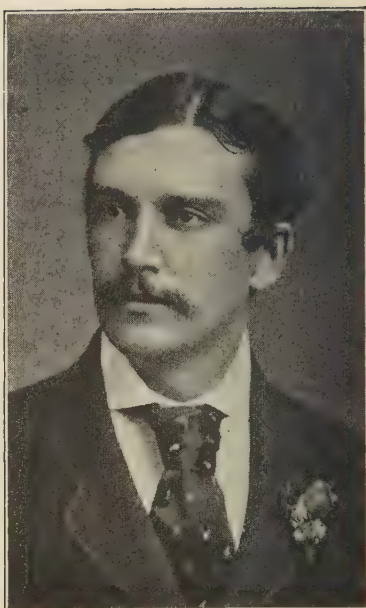


"PICTURE A LAKE!"

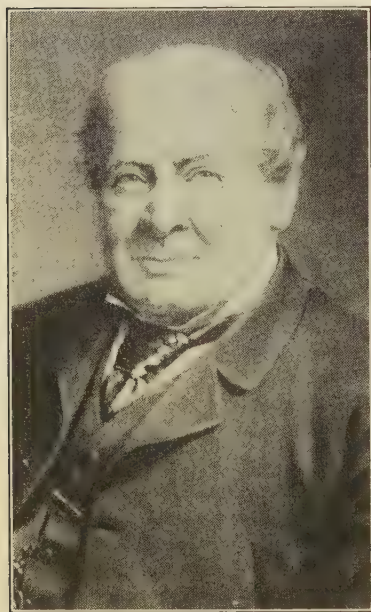
SUMMERING AT DUBLIN, NEW HAMPSHIRE



ROSE COGHLAN
"Leading Lady" at Wallack's.



HENRY J. MONTAGUE
Founder of The Lambs.



JOHN GILBERT
Leading Actor at Wallack's.



KATE CLAXTON
(Mrs. Charles A. Stevenson.)

PERFORMERS IN MACKAYE'S "WON AT LAST" (1877) AND "QUEEN AND WOMAN" (1876) (pages 278 and 249).

“On the upper floor Mr. J. Steele MacKaye has a very pretty parlour, hung with choice engravings, etchings and oil paintings, notably a portrait of his celebrated master, François Delsarte. The chamber is charming, picturesque, artistic to a degree. At the further end of the apartment is a well-arranged stage for his pupils. . . . Mr. MacKaye does not look like a man of Anglo-Saxon race. He has an Italian face, intelligent, expressive, mobile. His eyes are black, large and penetrating. His graceful, earnest and courteous manner is also thoroughly foreign. In Roscoe’s ‘Life of Lorenzo di Medici,’ the fine portrait of that great man, by Vasari, bears to Mr. MacKaye a likeness marvellously strong.

“‘Some appear to believe,’ said he, ‘that I pretend to turn any one, whether they have natural ability, or not, into a first-class actor.—Nonsense!—Then they say that I number the expressions of the face to so many hundreds and thousands.—Nonsense again!’

“It is impossible to be in Mr. MacKaye’s company five minutes without discovering him to be a man of unusual powers, a sound and well-balanced mind, full of practical common sense, not choked up, as some have imagined, with flimsy theories.”

In launching his school, my father issued a twenty-eight-page printed pamphlet: “*Conservatoire Æsthetique*, or School of Expression.” Some of the aims which kindled his thoughts then, and motivated his work through years of manifold labours, are implicit in the following excerpts from that pioneering challenge of 1877:

“*School of Expression*”

“In opening an institution so novel in name, it seems well to present the public with some account of its Philosophy and its Course of Study. . . .

“*The Imperative Need of Dramatic Training*”

“The glory of dramatic art lies in its power to move the heart of the common mass to sympathy with the exceptional few, in their battle with vulgarity and selfishness, and in their struggle to attain to higher forms of manhood. So also its glory lies in its capacity to expose to the super-refined, the wealthy, the fortunate, and hypercultured, that divine spark which slumbers with latent power within the breast of the rudest and most untutored man.

“Dramatic Art—true to its highest destiny—would convert the theatre into an unsectarian temple, where both high and low would be brought into sympathetic rapport; where the most opposite classes might learn to understand each other better, and to love and respect each other more. But the theatre, in order to exert this influence, must be able to command the services of a corps of artists who can, by the perfection of their art, make the finest dramatic literature fascinating to those promiscuous masses of society upon whose support the existence of the theatre depends. . . .

"The public has two distinct sides by which it may be won—its senses and its soul. The theatre appeals to the senses through the spectacular art of the scene painter and the sensational effects of the mechanician; it appeals to the soul through the emotional art of its actors. . . . The mechanician and the scene painter have caught with avidity at every suggestion the advancement of modern science could give them to produce their special effects with striking power. . . . The limited number of earnest, intelligent, disciplined actors, renders the emotional effects of a play far less certain of realisation than its mechanical effects.

"What is the result?

"Managers, well aware of this condition, are gradually giving more and more dangerous prominence to the merely spectacular portion of theatric art; and the plays which win success to-day are those which depend more upon their sensational stage attire than upon the dramatic ability of the acting company.—Thus, the purely material side of the art threatens to outstrip the ideal and æsthetic side, and to end in dedicating the theatre to mere sensation and frivolity. . . . Hundreds crowd to perform in public who have had no preliminary training.—Is this right?—Would any man dare apply to the leader of an orchestra for position among his musicians, if he had not already given years of study to his special instrument?—*Is the human body, with its infinite stops—a whole orchestra of instruments in itself—less worthy of attention than a violin, a flute, a trumpet, or a drum?* Is it easier to master?—Certainly not.

"Every aspirant to the stage should realise this, and hasten to acquire the same command of expression in his body that a good violinist possesses in his violin. . . . In the scenic art *behind* the actor, and in the musical art *in front* of him, preparatory training is essential to excellence and position. Why should the actor's art, which is the *centre and core* to which the others are merely accessory, be an exception to this rule?

"Genius may accomplish all things, but genius requires work to perfect its powers, and work often develops a genius latent and unsuspected.—*Genius is the power in the individual spontaneously to express the universal experiences of the race. It unmask man to himself. It implies two distinct faculties: to feel, to express.*

"The system of training used by Mr. MacKaye develops the student's faculty to feel by a scientific exposition of the natural facts and laws governing the manifestation of human emotions. It develops his faculty to express by thorough discipline in practical Pantomime, Stage Business, and Vocal Gymnastics. *Thus it aims to equalise and increase the activity of these complementary faculties, ultimately rendering their co-operation so complete and instinctive as to endow the art of the actor with the crowning characteristic of genius,—spontaneity. . . . Art is the last form of human effort to approach perfection. It is the final gauge of man's progress. . . . If the noblest era in the life of man is still to come, as we believe, then the advent of that era implies a grander Drama to reflect 'the age and body of its time'; for*

Theatric Art—calling, as it does, all the other arts into active co-operation—is the only one that can ever realise, with perfect fulness and living force, the sublimest ideals of the human mind. . . . The best age of the Drama lies, then, before—not behind us, and it will be reached when the Moral and Intellectual forces of Society and Science have been brought to bear upon its Art, through properly organised and thoroughly administered institutions of dramatic education.—These institutions must necessarily appear as civilisation advances. . . . It is to be hoped that this school may prove the germ from which there may be developed, at last, a permanent and national institution for Æsthetic Training in all its branches.”

“CATCHING A FISH”: “HARMONIC GYMNASTICS” OF ANCIENT JAPAN

In this admirable pamphlet, the main error of omission lies, I think, in its ignoring of the theatre’s irrational economic basis—commercial speculation. Aside from that, probably no such comprehensive ideal of the theatre’s art, as that sketched therein, had ever before been promulgated on Broadway by one so proficiently capable of fulfilling it. Though then but thirty-five, Steele MacKaye had already, *for at least twenty years*, been almost constantly training and attuning the sensitive instrument of his own organism to become “a whole orchestra of instruments in itself.” In this practice and ideal, which his enthusiasm newly proclaimed, he was—though probably unaware of it—but following a very ancient folk ideal of perfection in art—practiced for centuries by the theatre artists of Japan.

A few years ago, there visited me from Tokio an actor, thoroughbred in his craft for several generations—his father, grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather all having been actors in the classic drama of his country. This distinguished artist is Ennosuke Ichikawa. In modern garb, standing in our sitting-room—with audience only of my wife, myself and our children—he enacted for us an ancient study in pantomime, *Catching a Fish*, conveying the image of a fisherman, flinging his line from a precipitous rock, to land his quarry. The *nuances* of dramatic force and delicacy in his action were indescribably perfect and beautiful. He became the motion-picture of a Hokusai.

This single pantomimic study—one of several hundred others as training for his repertory—Ichikawa told me *he had practiced for fifteen years* before his master would permit him to perform in public. Watching his execution of it, there came back to my memory—with a wholly comparable beauty—the recollection of my father,

illustrating his own pantomime of "harmonic gymnastics" to my brother Will, his pupil.

Here, then, was—and still is—an art which discerns and harmonizes in the human body those "infinite stops," profound and delicate with the music of motion, of which Steele MacKaye wrote in his pamphlet of 1877. Where, one may ask, in our modern civilisation, except in perennial Japan, have those essentials of the theatre's art, which he then not merely expounded but practised, been correlated with the living drama of a "permanent and national institution?"

LECTURES AT ART LEAGUE; TEACHING ACTORS

Concerning this "school" of MacKaye's (of which he was as yet sole teacher and exponent), and the significant effect of his teaching upon art students and some leading actors of the time, Nym Crinkle wrote (in May, '78):

"About a year ago, the Reformer opened a conservatorium on Union Square. During that same winter the *Art League* engaged him to deliver a course of lectures on graphic art. The speaker talked extemporaneously, before a blackboard, to a large and select class of the most intelligent amateurs, winning their respect by his learning, enthusiasm and eloquence.

"I met him one day, just after his 'School of Expression' had been opened and he told me with charming *naïveté* how many mistakes he had made. He seemed to understand now that, to reform anything, one must not in our day commence a crusade, nor expect at the mere announcement of reform to have the sympathy and support of the class that needs reforming.—'I am now going to work quietly to teach,' said he, 'and I shall rest the claims of my "system" and labours on the examples that my school furnishes.'

"It would be improper for me to name the players who put themselves under the teacher. On the whole they prefer not to have it known. Some of them are conspicuous actors and have improved rapidly. *There is one actor, however, whose name I feel justified in using, because he is the most brilliant example of them all, and he has taken occasion to speak publicly of the services rendered him by MacKaye.*

HIGH TRIBUTE FROM HIS PUPIL, JOHN MCCULLOUGH

"*This actor is Mr. John McCullough, looked upon now as the coming man of the American stage in tragedy. When he played his last season at Booth's Theatre, everybody was amazed at the leap he had made in his art. His Othello and Richelieu astonished me by being entirely unlike his former impersonations of those characters. The native vigour, resonance, and fire were there, but they were disci-*

plined and controlled. A nicer balance of faculty was apparent. The intelligibility of the subtler emotions had been made sharper and clearer. There were noble climaxes of passion, less waste of energy in making himself felt, a cleaner adaptation of tone and gesture to the exigent thought—more repose, more dignity, more grace.—*The crickets suddenly discovered that John McCullough had genius*—genius being a thing that suddenly descends upon a man in the middle of his career!

“‘The fact is,’ said John to me, ‘that teacher, MacKaye, has taught me more in three months than I could have learned otherwise in twenty years, and I don’t care who knows it.’

“This was very frank of John.

“Said the teacher: ‘I couldn’t have taught him if he hadn’t been gifted in a wonderful manner.’

“This was very just of the teacher.”

“When McCullough appeared again in New York, as *Virginus*,” writes J. I. C. Clarke, in his autobiography,* “this was a new McCullough indeed! Here was a chaste spirit, an utmost grace, a sure-tempered power, that flashed out only at the mountain tops. It was beautiful, almost dazzling and the town rose to it.

“The wonder of it was then esteemed a *miracle*. But McCullough had laid hands on the only American who had the skill to translate the secrets of the Théâtre Français high classic drama into terms that he could understand.—Tirelessly he laboured, until he stood forth the Roman father, terrible and beautiful, above the form of the daughter in whose bosom he had sheathed his sacrificial sword.

“What an electric moment that was! Never can those who saw forget it—its splendour, horror, and supreme beauty. Thenceforth the way was clear for him. It was remarkable how few knew anything of the process by which McCullough had transformed his art and so superbly revealed himself—few knew even the name of his teacher—Steele MacKaye.”

Five years older than MacKaye, John McCullough in 1877 was forty years of age. He had come to America from Ireland when he was sixteen, having made his first stage appearance, at Philadelphia, in 1855, at the age of eighteen. During many years he acted frequently with Edwin Forrest, who regarded him as his successor in his distinctive stage tradition, and on his death left to McCullough his play manuscripts. Like Forrest, McCullough felt and expressed an instant enthusiasm for MacKaye, to whom he became deeply attached in friendship. In our home he was often a guest very popular with us youngsters, who clambered his knees for stories of old Ireland and the stage. During his New York season, that spring of ’77, in order that his teacher might observe his per-

* *My Life and Memories*, J. I. C. Clarke, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1925.

formances intensively, came this pass for MacKaye, scratched hastily by the actor's hand:

"Booth's Theatre, April 4th, Please give two seats for any and all of my nights. *John McCullough.*"

And this note the next morning from Alger to MacKaye indicated another pupil's deep interest in this tutelage of the famous actor at Booth's:

"My dear friend: McCullough wants us both to breakfast with him again to-morrow morning at $\frac{1}{4}$ before 2. Can you be there? Send word if you cannot.—With ever-fresh love and admiration yours, *William R. Alger.*"

From Boston University, another pupil, Prof. Monroe, wrote to him (April 21st, '77), forecasting summer plans:

"My dear friend, MacKaye: Your kind letter of the 17th opened with very welcome words: '*At last I am settled in my School of Expression.*' Yet it sounds as mysterious as sudden to me. I thought you were engaged with Boucicault. . . . Cannot you and Mrs. MacKaye make us another visit this summer at our country home in Dublin? That lower front room would be at your service, and a wood fire whenever you wished. . . . I do want more drill."

This second Dublin visit took place about three months later. Meantime, the call to playwriting competed with the call for teaching.

MONTAGUE IMPATIENT; WRITING WON AT LAST; HOME VISTAS

"My dear MacKaye," wrote H. J. Montague (April 19 from Washington, D. C.): "Will you, like a good fellow, seriously think of finishing my piece? I want it very badly, and feel that we have wasted enough time over the matter. I'm here for the remainder of the week: next at Baltimore."

The "piece" here mentioned was MacKaye's play, *Won at Last*, already contracted for by Wallack for Montague,* but delayed in completion by the School of Expression work. In response now to this urgent "reminder" from Montague, my father returned to work on the play, which was completed amidst varied household occupations, thus hinted by my mother:

"*At Stamford, the whole last act of Won at Last was written in one sitting. While writing it, he never stirred from his chair, till it*

* Cf. page i, 266.

was finished. . . . There he had two secretaries, his amanuenses, to copy his manuscripts by hand, prepare prompt-copies, etc. There were also two elderly ‘retainers’; old Mr. William Humphries, and another: and the inevitable tramps (among them, William, and Dan Kelly, who acted as gardener and coachman), and other transient hangers-on: not to mention the goat, dogs, horses, pouter-pigeons, fancy poultry and the tame crow. Besides nurses (‘Choate’ Annie and Spanish Nettie), cook, housemaid, and Miss Huntington, the governess (who taught all the boys in an upstairs schoolroom), there were always some ‘Delsarte pupils’ staying with us.

“Seldom less than thirteen beds were made up, yet my children would nightly be asking Aunt Sadie and me where they should sleep that night, on account of the New York guests—actors, critics, artists, managers, etc.—who always turned up at the last minute, so we never knew how many places to set at table. In table-talk, politics, art, philosophy, playwriting, and the humanities intermingled with the eloquent host’s love of his children and their interests besides that of all the dumb animals in our neighbourhood.

“One day, he rushed out of the house from dinner, to succour two poor horses harnessed to a heavy coal wagon, which had stuck in deep mud. They were floundering pitifully, unable to budge the cart, in spite of the terrible oaths and lashings of the brutal teamster.—Well, first he called to the teamster to stop whipping them. Then very quietly he went up to the horses and stroked them till they were quiet, patting their noses affectionately. Then he did something astonishing and mysterious. He just put his mouth close to an ear of each horse, and whispered in it—softly: Then he made a gesture—a quieting, beautiful gesture—and at one bound the team sprang forward, pulling that heavy cart from the slough. And so they drove on.”

ILL HEALTH; “OUR BÊTE NOIR, MR. DUN”

At this period my mother has described my father as “very nervous and ill, at times hardly able to walk half a block,” in spite of which he was busily occupied also with teaching at 23 Union Square. From there he wrote to her (May 2nd, ’77):

“My heart’s own—Your dear note came this morning, and I should have appeared in Stamford to-night . . . but I must remain here trying to raise money enough to meet cheerfully our *bête noir*, Mr. Dun. I am doing my utmost . . . I ache to my heart’s core for my boys. . . . Ever in love yours with Heart, Head, Hand and Hope,—James.—There! I send you enough H’s to supply all the Cockneys in London.”

BECKS AND PICKETT, SECRETARIES; A “CARLOAD” FOR DUBLIN, N. H.

The “secretaries” above mentioned by my mother were William Pickett and Alfred Becks. The latter, after leaving my father, was,

for more than thirty years, secretary to A. M. Palmer. Later, until his death in 1925, he was librarian to the magician, Harry Houdini. In a childhood memory of him at Stamford, I recall "Becks" as a leisurely, very stout man, lying in a hammock, where in trying to take a noon siesta he was plagued by the upward peckings of our tame crow, mischievously concealed below him, in the ample shade of his secretarial bulk. In those days, typewriters (which my father had helped to introduce into England, in '73 *) had not yet come into general use, and several manuscripts of my father's plays are still extant, copied in the fair, round scripts of Becks and Pickett. Teaching and *Won at Last* affairs detained my father in Stamford until midsummer. On August 3rd, Prof. Monroe wrote to him, from New Hampshire:

"My very dear friend—Yesterday's mail brought us the welcome news that you would come to Dublin, if we could secure rooms for you and your party at Kendall's. . . . Mrs. Kendall has just driven up to say that they will take you. The rooms are on the lower floor, on the side nearest Cotton's. There are other rooms upstairs which your pupils, etc., can have. They will take you and Mrs. MacKaye for \$6.00 a week each, and the children for \$4.00. Mr. Gleason will meet you with team, as you suggest."

At the little country station of Keene, N. H., on the evening of August 9th, '77, a miscellaneous party was deposited amid a medley of trunks and hand luggage, gazing northeast towards the approaching "team" of Major-domo Gleason. Various assortments and sizes of babies and boys, voluble with exploding anticipations; their eager, golden-haired mother and unperturbed "Aunt Sadie"; two secretaries, fat and lean; two nursery maids—dark and light; sundry lady-pupils and a barking dog: all these barricaded the dark form of a rapt, Poe-browed man, with a clip-winged "raven" perched on his shoulder. From afar the detective eyes of old Gleason squinted with shrewd conviction.

"Ye-os!" he chucked to his team, "thar's our rail-shipment. That carload can't be nothin' else but MacKayes."

* Cf. page i, 209.

CHAPTER X

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

New York, Stamford, Dublin, N. H., On Tour

August, '77—March, '79

THE BLACK PROCESSIONAL: COMPLETING HAZEL KIRKE

ACCORDINGLY, STEELE MACKAYE WAS SETTLED AGAIN WITH HIS family, for a few weeks, on the mountainous northern slopes above Lake Monadnock, this time on "Kendall Hill," in the Kendall's ample farmhouse situated near the present Crowningshield estate. At the Cotton's, a neighbouring farmhouse, my father rented a quiet room to write in, and here—during August, 1877—he completed his play,* later called *Hazel Kirke*, which he had commenced the summer before, in the Monroe's summer-house, under the title of *Cast Adrift*.

Leading from the Cotton's toward Kendall's was a grassy foot-path, shaded by apple-trees, on a ridge overlooking Mt. Monadnock to the south. In fair weather, while writing his play, my father would often pace this path, accompanied in procession by three of his pet animals, forming a dark frieze-like silhouette against the green hills, as the vivid black-haired author moved back and forth, followed close at heel, in procession, by Jet, the black duck-dog, Jack the tame crow, and a purring, coal-black cat.

HIGHWAY ROBBERY A LA ROSSINI

That August and September held for my father a pleasant combination of literary labours and boon companionships. Close by was the household of his devoted friend and pupil, Prof. Lewis B. Monroe, whose wife (née Adaline Osgood, sister of George L. Osgood,† well-known choral-leader of Boston) was a gifted musician and composer, a rich-hearted, serene-spirited Swedenborgian, who radiated an abounding charm of idealism, art, humour and friendship, which iridiated their household of gifted daughters and all their neighbourhood. Our families were long closely associated. ‡

* The play as completed that summer, then entitled *Hazel MacKenzie*, differed considerably from its later versions, as acted in 1879 and '80. In the 1877 cast of characters, *Arthur Gordon Travers* was listed to be played by Montague and *Donald MacKenzie*, the *Miller* (later named *Dunstan Kirke*) by John Gilbert. † Cf. page ii, 327.

‡ In after-years Mrs. Monroe composed a melodious operetta (*The Astral Telegraph*, a merry satire on pseudo-mystical cults), to words and plot by my brother, Harold, as well as the music of a *Spinning Song*, for my own first-

Among visitors to Dublin were Steele MacKaye's father, Col. James McKaye, the Colonel's daughter Emily, with her husband, Baron Christian von Hesse, and their friend, Count Julius von Seissel. In company with these (except the Colonel) and a few other neighbours, my father sallied forth one August afternoon, on a gay excursion of "highway robbery."

Disguising themselves in the gipsy garb and "make-up" of a band of vagabond musicians, carrying their instruments, the troupe wandered along the lakeside road, where the wealthy newcomers and sporting tourists were wont to drive out in their swell carriages, to show off their high-stepping pacers. Here, grouped in the middle of the highway, the little party of vagabonds "held up" these equipages of fashion, under fire of improvised operatic *concerti*.

The baron, an accomplished violinist, with his fiddle, the count with his piccolo, and my father with director's *bâton*, accompanied my Aunt Emily, who sang with her marvellous voice * arias of Rossini and Mozart from Italian operas, which she knew by heart and executed like a prima donna. Following these arias, all the others joined lustily in the choruses.

Thus, held up by a burletta of robber-barons and metropolitan melodies, the astounded tourists in their tallyhoes and tandems were not permitted to drive on, till the gipsy director had passed the hat, and collected a very appreciable pile of pennies and greenbacks. So, by nightfall, from the official silk hat of the laughing beggar-troupe, a "special highway fund" was duly donated to the local treasurer of the Village Improvement Society.

EDWIN ADAMS BENEFIT: FRANCIS WILSON

By early October of '77, MacKaye was back again in New York, where, on October 12th, he performed in a benefit to the eminent actor, Edwin Adams, who died shortly afterward, on October 28th. Of that occasion another eminent "Player," Francis Wilson, then in his youth, has recently recorded an interesting glimpse, in these words of his own recollection.

"Steele MacKaye: what that name meant in the theatre, not so many years ago—what it means to-day to those who know much of the theatre—the most potent, constructive mind of his time! How he filled the eye and mind! How he filled the room in which he stood!

published words to music, and the incidental accompaniments to one of my earliest plays.

* Cf. page i, 249: her singing with Gounod.

"I appeared on the same stage with him once, and I remember it as vividly as if it were yesterday. The occasion was a benefit, at the Academy of Music, to the dying Edwin Adams, who had so held the pulse of our world with his *Enoch Arden*. MacKaye, with other notable players, had volunteered to appear in the mob, in scenes from *Julius Cæsar*.—As we sat in the dressing-room making ready, the talk fell upon memory and committing lines in acting. I was then interested in the Loiset system, by which a mass of historical dates, names, and numbers might be recalled through word-combinations.

"What particular period are you now memorising?" MacKaye asked me.

"The English kings," I replied rather confidently.—And I rattled them off for a while with much pride, to be halted presently by MacKaye, who said: 'No, I *think* such a king reigned and ceased to reign—in. . . . Now try again!'

"I was puzzled, thought a moment and found he was right, as I had used the wrong word which had tripped me. I quickly supplied the right word mentally, and the exact date verbally, to be hailed with approval by the famous author, who exclaimed, with a twinkling glance:

"A good system of Mnemonics, Francis, but—not *always* infallible!"

NAMING WON AT LAST: ELABORATE PREPARATION FOR WALLACK'S

At that time, MacKaye was engaged in final revisions of his "piece" for Montague, still unnamed. Concerning this Wallack wrote to him these notes (from "13 W. 30th St."):

(Oct. 8): "When we last met, you told me your play would be ready this month. How is it progressing, and when can I have or read it? If it turns out all we hope and believe, I must arrange the business so as to give it the fairest possible chance."

(Nov. 3): "To-morrow I should be glad to see you here at eleven A. M. if you can make it convenient. Or, if you wish it, I'll come to you—though, here at my home we should be undisturbed."

This final reading of the new play to Wallack led at once to some "weeks of elaborate preparation" for the play's production. During these scenic preparations and rehearsals MacKaye was also busily occupied with the pupils of his School of Expression, and with his eminent actor-pupil who, then "on the road," telegraphed him from Baltimore, Nov. 13th:

"Can you take the lightning train to-morrow at nine A. M. and spend a few days with me? Answer. *John McCullough*."

At his Union Square studio my mother wrote to him from Stamford (Dec. 5th):

"Is the play to be on Saturday, or not?—Expect me Thursday. I wish I could be with you every moment. . . . Something disagreeable to tell you—bills: Mr. —, the butcher . . . a note which will go to protest on the 7th . . . \$50 would be a blessing . . . send the money to-morrow, if possible.

"My heart is in my throat about the play. If you call it *John Fleming's Wife*, will it do as well in England where *Arkwright's Wife* is known?—Can't you get Wallack to forget that he ever had a play called *How He Loved Her*, and call ours *How He Won Her*? I like that the best of all. . . . The children are very well. Miss Huntington is back and the school in full swing—a world of love and all my thoughts and hopes!"

Just before this opening of his play, Montague wrote to him:

"Wallack tells me you want to call the piece *J. F.'s Wife*. For heaven's sake, *don't!* Even *Tangled* is better than that.—*A Life and a Love* is much better."

Thus, up to the last minute, the play's title was unsettled, and even after its production one of its tentative titles *Lost and Won*, is mentioned as its name in a review by *The Stage*, Dec. 13th. *Won at Last*, however, was its definitive title on the programme of the opening night, at Wallack's Theatre, Dec. 10, 1877, with this remarkable cast of characters: *

"JOHN FLEMING a man of the world...	MR. H. J. MONTAGUE
Prof. Tracy, a man of science.....	MR. JOHN GILBERT
Dr. Sterling, a man of fact.....	MR. W. R. FLOYD
Will, a young sea captain.....	MR. EBEN PLYMPTON
Major Bunker, a confiding husband.....	MR. E. M. HOLLAND
Baron Von Spiegel, one who knows.....	MR. J. W. SHANNON
Capt. Mandle.....	MR. W. A. EYTINGE
Jack Driscoll, a sailor.....	MR. G. F. BROWNE
Robert Blunt, a faithful servant.....	MR. J. W. LEONARD
Grace Fleming, a true woman.....	MISS ROSE COGHLAN
Mrs. Tracy, the professor's wife.....	MME. PONISI
Sophie Bunker, a French adventuress.....	MISS GABRIELLE DU SAULD
Flora Fitzgiggle, a faded flower.....	MRS. JOHN SEFTON
Jane McCarthy, a servant.....	MISS E. BLAISDELL

ACT I—ASHES. ACT II—EMBERS. ACT III—FIRE. ACT IV—FLAME.
ACT V—FIRESIDE

In 1877, "all star" casts went unlabelled, but the above cast of *Won at Last*, including the foremost Wallack artists in their prime,

* In 1879, at the Baldwin Theatre, San Francisco, David Belasco staged *Won at Last*, with another remarkable cast, including James O'Neill, James A. Hearn, Mrs. Hearn and Lewis Morrison.

would to-day be hailed as a super-galaxy of talent for the "first night" of a young American dramatist's first comedy on Broadway.

"BRILLIANT SUCCESS": "UNQUESTIONABLY THE BEST OF ALL AMERICAN COMEDIES THUS FAR"

The public verdict on the play was emphatic success.

"It is unquestionably the best of all the American comedies thus far produced, and the author has risen at one bound to front rank," wrote the critic of the Dramatic News. And the same critic wrote further:

"In chronicling the genuine success of Mr. MacKaye's Won at Last, it is safe to assert that it is the most original play produced in New York for many years. It not only delighted a large audience, but it gave a practical definition to Mr. Boucicault, who sat in a stage box, of what constitutes a comedy."

Laid in an American setting, "on the coast of New England"—reminiscent again, as in his earlier play *Marriage* (1872), of his own boyhood days at Newport—*Won at Last* was welcomed for its indigenous characters and scenes. Describing the opening night, William Winter wrote of the play as *"An Analysis of the Passions and Affections"*:

"On a first night at Wallack's Theatre, this house, peculiarly, seems lapped in an atmosphere of refinement and of high social vitality. Goodwill, sprightliness, thought, taste and fashion pervade the occasion. Last night was one of these festivals, when for the first time, Won at Last, set in costly and handsome scenery, was acted with extraordinary felicity, and received with a warmth of public favour very rare in this decorous theatre. The Wallack audience is usually cool; last night it was full of flame . . . an unequivocal popular welcome. Won at Last is a thorough and really brilliant success. There are reasons for believing that this verdict of the public heart will be, and will remain, the verdict of the best judgment of the time."

"Mr. Steele MacKaye, who received a vociferous call, bowed and had the grace and taste not to speak. . . . Mr. Montague played with real power. Mr. Gilbert, in his paternal sweetness of nature—Miss Rose Coghlan, at her best in strong sentiment—were wholly admirable. . . . Won at Last contains good plot, good character, good effect, and a profound undertone of wholesome moral suggestion. There are passages in the second act which should be cut; there is some clumsiness in the machinery of the fourth act; but Mr. MacKaye has given the old pack of cards a new and vigorous shuffle, and has cut a King."

"Well written, well constructed, well conceived," wrote the World critic, *"Won at Last* deserves the enthusiasm it created. There were no bounds to the applause with which it was received. . . . The simplicity of the materials does not prevent the author from working them

up to frequent, natural 'situations' of the most startling kind. Indeed—if it be a fault—the strong emotional situations begin too early, come too frequently, are too long sustained. Not that it lacks humour, but the 'comedy-drama' has in it too much of drama."

"*The production of a new play by an American author,*" wrote the Stage, "*is an event of such rare occurrence that it provokes a vast degree of curiosity. . . . In all truth, of *Won at Last* it may be said that another play of surpassing excellence, vigorous and harmonious in all its parts, pure and elevating in its tone and sentiment, highly creditable to its author, has been added to the long list of Mr. Lester Wallack.*"

In its "moralities" the play appears to have been too daring to escape attack by some conservatives of that period; for, on the Sunday following the opening, there appeared in the Sun a letter from the author defending its morals with due spirit. Apropos of the "moonlight effects, remarkably well managed," cited in a first-night notice, a reminiscence of a later accident to these effects, recounted by Nym Crinkle relates an amusing anecdote, with the caption:

"MACKAYE'S SCIENTIFIC MOON: HORROR-STRICKEN MONTAGUE"

"In his *Won at Last* production MacKaye built great hopes upon a moon effect. There was to be a scientific moon that, as it rose, gleamed red through the stratum of atmosphere, changed to yellow as it ascended, and finally came out in lustrous silver. The company called this 'the Delsarte moon'—and it came near wrecking the company.

"It was to make its appearance in deep gloaming, just as the lovers were breathing hushed vows in the front groove of tremulous music. Mr. Harry Montague, the hero, had braced himself for his 'low and soft,' the strings were vibrating plaintively, when the audience began to whoop with uproarious laughter. Montague, utterly discomfited, turned—and saw to his amazement, *three* moons of different colours sailing the evening sky with reckless abandon. . . . After horrible anathemas, threats of discharge, suits for damages—the next night a new, expert moon-man was secured and Montague reassured.

"Unfortunately, the new moon-man had no 'astronomy' with Delsarte orbs, for, just as the lovers had tenderly tuned themselves—again the audience broke out in wildest laughter. The enraged Montague, white and blue, turned again—and gazed, horror-stricken, at the mad antics of that moon. . . . It was going up and down like a jig-saw. It shook itself; it even uttered audible 'damns,' and rattled; at last, it leaped out of the canvas and rolled across the stage. Mr. Montague stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth and came down to the footlights. He said afterwards that had the audience stopped laughing long enough—he would have asked them to excuse the interruption while the author killed the moon-man."

MONTAGUE'S SEALSKIN CLOAK: *ERMINÉ* VANQUISHES *CHEESECLOTH*

From its inception, as we have seen, this play had been designed for Montague, who—ever since the last-minute non-production at Wallack's of MacKaye's play *A Radical Fool*, in which he had rehearsed the leading part, in 1874 *—had desired to have a MacKaye play to star in, on his return to England. Montague, therefore, considered *Won at Last* as "his piece," but was awaiting the public verdict on its New York première before actually purchasing the English rights to it. How this purchase (an out and out sale, announced by Montague publicly at the time) was immediately responsible for another one, has been related to me in this anecdote by my mother:

"You remember my brown sealskin cloak? I always called it *Montague's*: for this is how I came by it. I saw it first—and pined for it—in a New York shop. So your father (who had come down that day from Stamford on business with Montague) said: 'All right: If Montague buys the rights to *Won at Last*, you shall have it. Wait here till I come back!'

"So he left me in the shop, and I waited—waited in trepidation—hours and hours, it seemed, till it was almost time to catch the train home to Stamford. At last he came rushing back, waving some green bills, which he thrust in the hands of the shopkeeper, crying out:

"'Quick now, Molly! Hurry up!'

"And off we rushed for the train—carrying the precious purchase. Then I knew once again *Ermine* had vanquished *Cheese-cloth*. For Montague had bought the play—that bought my sealskin!" †

Montague, however, had then actually paid down but a small advance of the stipulated total of \$15,000, and he failed to pay the balance; so—to assuage his perennial "*bête noir*, Mr. Dun"—MacKaye had again to take to flying lecture trips, as revealed by these notes of his to my mother, at Dover, Mass., where she was nursing her father in his last illness:

("Palmer House, Chicago," Jan. 12, '78): "Dear Wife—I have just returned from Beloit, Wis.—train over five hours late. I have travelled about 1,200 miles, at cost of \$180, to give two lectures, in two small Western towns. My pay, net, is about \$60—and a half dead carcass. . . . Two hours hence I start for Delaware, Ohio—21 hours away; lecture to-morrow night there, next night Columbus, and next day start for New York. . . . Forgive this forlorn letter—to gi'n out for more.—Ever thine—J. S. M."

* Cf. footnote on page i, 230.

† Montague never acted *Won at Last* in England, for soon afterwards (August 11, '78), while on tour in the west, he met his early death in San Francisco. *Won at Last* closed its run at Wallack's on Jan. 13, 1878.

(New York, 23 Union S., Jan. 24, '78): "Your letters and Hal's from Dover* are a Godsend. I am pressed every side. Every one believes I have made that \$15,000 and is determined I shan't have it long. As it is, I expect to fight Montague for what he owes me. . . . I am trying, with a sick heart and worn-out head, to write a new play—in hopes to save us from absolute ruin. I am strongly tempted to go at once into bankruptcy, assign all I have to my creditors, and begin life—at least free of debt. . . . My best love to your Father."

Soon afterwards, Nicholas Medbery, my mother's father died, passing instantly away in his old New England rocking-chair, as he said to her with a bright smile: "Ah, Mary, you're a hero!" Heroic indeed she was, and remained, through all sorrows and anxieties, returning home to more "cashless glory" of her artist-husband's career. For publicly all was apparent "glory" and affluence.

"RISEN AT ONE BOUND TO FRONT RANK"

As dramatist now, in his own right, once again, as in earlier débuts of differing functions—as lecturer (in '71), as actor-manager (in '72)—and as *Hamlet* in London (in '73)—MacKaye was hailed as having "risen at one bound to front rank" in his profession.

Won at Last, his first play uncollaborated and underived in plot to be acted—American in its theme and setting, produced at "the first theatre in the land"—was a success as immediate as *Rose Michel* and long-lasting. Twenty-five years later, Daniel Frohman wrote to my mother (from "Daly's Theatre," of which he was then manager), enclosing a cheque:

"Here is a small sum, which may come in well towards extras for Christmas—the net result of one week of *Won at Last*."

During several years, after its first run at Wallack's, it was widely acted throughout the United States, including two revivals in which MacKaye himself acted.

"STEELE MACKAYE'S COMBINATION": SPRING TOUR WITH PUPILS

The first of these was undertaken in April '78, for a spring road-tour.† With the purpose of co-ordinating his ideas and experiences

* From Dover my mother wrote him: "I long to know how the *new play* progresses. I am so glad about the plot."

† In April, Col. MacKaye wrote him, from Paris: "It will give me much pleasure to submit your play, *Won at Last*, to Mons. Régnier at the Théâtre Français."

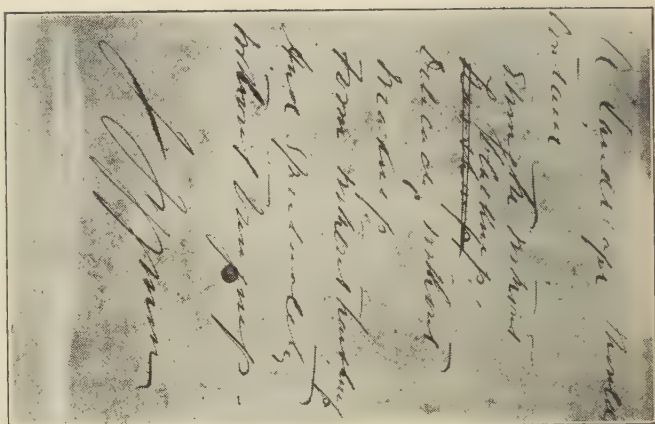


MARY MEDBERY MACKAYE

(Mrs. Steele MacKaye—aged 32.)

Drawn in pencil by Steele MacKaye.

(In the margin he has written: "Sketched with Mama alone in library at Stamford, on Percy's second birthday anniversary, March 16th—1877, by Papa—J. S. M.—10½ P. M.")



JOSEPH JEFFERSON
Comedian (about 1878).

LANDSCAPE SKETCH IN CRAYON

Drawn by Joseph Jefferson for Steele MacKaye, 1878. On the back of same Jefferson has written: "A landscape should contain—strength without blackness, delicacy without weakness, form without harshness, and spirituality without vagueness. J. Jefferson" (page 291).



in playhouse and studio, and of demonstrating publicly the results of his private teaching, he organised an entirely new company, with weeks of careful rehearsal, in which he cast two of his pupils from his School of Expression, Miss Blanche Meda and Miss Ida Gray, in the rôles of *Grace Fleming* and *Jane McCarthy*. For during this season, besides acting at Wallack's, he had been continuing his teaching at 23 Union Square, as well as occasionally in Boston.

The new organisation announced itself as "Steele MacKaye's Combination," with "Steele MacKaye, Manager; E. Kidder, Business Manager, and W. Humphries, Treasurer." In the cast, C. W. Coudock acted *Prof. Tracy*. The tour opened at Worcester, Mass., April 22nd. After three weeks of short stands in New England towns (on May 11th playing in the author's "home town," Stamford), the tour closed with a week in Philadelphia (May 13-20). ("Immense enthusiasm—five recalls after second act, last night," writes home my father, May 4th.) Everywhere the play was splendidly received, with special emphasis on the results achieved by its author as teacher of dramatic art.

"During this tour," observed the Brooklyn Eagle, "MacKaye may consider Miss Blanche Meda, who acts *Grace Fleming*, one of his greatest triumphs in the art of teaching, for he has converted her by his genius from something little better than a block of wood into a thoroughly good actress. MacKaye himself looks the genius to perfection. His eyes would do credit to a Napoleon, or a Talma."

"I always like a reformer" (wrote Stephen Fiske, the New York dramatic critic), "who puts his hand to work and does some hard reforming himself. That is what MacKaye is doing. His experiment has resulted in a peculiar triumph for himself—but even more for the whole status of the American stage. . . . Here was a company whose theatrical prestige was insignificant, compared with the brilliant Wallack company which first produced the play, yet there was no mistaking the improved efficacy: a subtler meaning had been given to the details, a finer finish to the characters. There was more coherency, balance, relative beauty in the whole; more sincerity, spontaneity and nature in the several parts. . . . When I saw Miss Meda's début in another play uptown, I despaired of her ever doing anything on the stage. When, therefore, I saw the skill, repose, simplicity, cogency of her work in *Won at Last*, I gave in to Mr. MacKaye and his 'system.' Now it follows there must be something in this fellow."

A "GREAT IRISH DRAMA" FOR J. C. WILLIAMSON; DUBLIN, N. H. AGAIN

During the last week of this tour, while MacKaye was playing in *Won and Lost* at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, J. C. Williamson, the Irish actor, was playing there, at the Arch

Street, in *Struck Oil*, an extremely popular success. Here MacKaye and Williamson conferred in regard to a new play, on an Irish theme, which Williamson desired the author of *Won at Last* to write for him. As a result, soon afterward, Williamson wrote from Chicago (June 13th):

“My dear MacKaye—I have a great mind to give up altogether my departure for Europe and devote my time to preparations for next season. I think we could spend a week or two together very advantageously, studying and planning the plot and incidents of the forthcoming GREAT IRISH DRAMA!”

This “week or two together” soon eventuated. Williamson did “give up altogether” his return to Europe. Instead, the following autumn, he departed for Australia, where his further career of over thirty years changed from actor to manager and theatre magnate, as which he became known as “the Charles Frohman of Australia.” Meantime, in July of ’78, for the proposed “week or two,” he joined my father at Dublin, N. H., where once more the MacKaye household was settled for the summer at the Kendall farm. There, on July 31st, my father wrote to his sister, Emily:

“Mr. Williamson has been staying with me, while I have been plotting his piece. I have been so lost in this work that I have hardly known whether I was on my head or my heels. I have succeeded at last in satisfying Mr. W. He has positively ordered the play, and has just started for New York.”

The day before Williamson “started,” however, there had occurred on those Dublin hills a gay and droll adventure, which has been handed down in our family lore, through some merry verses, dashed off by my mother between the dawn and breakfast of Williamson’s departure.

“Before sunrise,” my mother has written, “I awoke, jumped up, and seized some old scraps of brown paper (unwrapt from a bundle). On those scraps, with a stub of a pencil, I began writing—fast and furiously—never once stopping till, with the last rhyme, I heard stirrings below stairs. So, dressing quickly, I hurried to the breakfast table, where my *Legend*, read aloud, was hailed with shouts of laughter by the assembled “fishermen,” including Williamson, just before he started for the train—and for far-off Australia.”

My mother’s verses relate an epical fish-story, of some fifty stanzas: “*The Legend of Burphy’s Preserve*,” of which these open-

ing lines have memorialised "the place and date" of that "Burphy's Preserve Summer," during which my father was engaged in laying out the Irish play for Williamson:

*"To be exact as to place and date,
'Twas in the good year 'Seventy-Eight,
Near old Monadnock bold and free,
Were gathered the goodly company.*

*"There first the son of William came,
An actor not unknown to fame,
On whom had smiled both air and soil
That lucky day when he 'struck oil.'*

*"An author, too, of troubled air,
For whom—though full of present care—
Some sorrows let us hope were past
Since he could say he'd won at last."*

To the "goodly company" of these rhymes were added the Rev. "Charlie" Ward, a sprightly parson and pamphleteer on the drama, (who illustrated the rhymes with pictures, one of which is here reproduced), and "a Pickett guard of one" in the person of the "Author's" secretary (Wm. Pickett). These—all *very* "professional" sportsmen in trout-fishing—on the day before, had been despatched by the Author's imaginative eloquence to a heavenly-vista'd "trout-lake," or "preserve," owned by one Burphy, a farmer, miles back in the mountains. Thither,

*"When morning dawned, the happy three
Were up with the lark and the busy bee,
Were up and off with a joyful mind,
All but the Author—who stayed behind!"*

The *Legend* is too long and varied to relate in full. Suffice to record that the heavenly-vista'd lake turned out to be—a *horse-trough*, horizoned only by farmer Burphy's barnyard. There

*"thick as flies
Round sugar barrels on the docks,
Packed like the sardines in a box,
The trout were lying fifty deep." . . .*

So befell still further fiascos in this wild-goose chase of disillusioned sportsmen, till, at last—turning towards the distant "Author" of their chagrin, through falling shadows of sundown—

*"There started slowly homeward then
Three sadder and three wiser men. . . .*

*"About the meeting on the Hill?—
The gossips' tongues are strangely still,
And we would draw a kindly veil,
Lest wisdom lack and courage fail.*

*"But—would you rouse the Parson's ire,
Or would you see the smouldering fire
From out the Actor's eyelids blaze,
Or would you meet the Pickett's gaze,
Or would you shake the Author's nerve—
Just whisper low . . . 'Burphy's Preserve'!"*

This midsummer adventure, thanks to my mother's swift rhymes, that early morning, led to an instant "pact" among the Dublin crew, wherein "Burphy's Preserve" was the magic password—a "sesame" which resulted in a fitting sequel. Cubisticly it might be called

"A MAGNATE DESCENDING A STAIRCASE."

Many years after that Dublin summer, on the grand staircase of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, New York, the great Captain of the Australian Theatre Industry was slowly coming down the deep-carpeted steps to the main lobby. The gloom of a far grandeur enveloped his gray temples and his immaculate form of fashion, as over one whose famed arrival has been foreshadowed by the Delphic columns—of the press.

In the lobby below, a plump, chop-whiskered man, with a touch of jovial seediness in his clerical garb and manner, was making modest inquiry of the desk-clerk: "Mr. J. C. Williamson—is he in?"

An awesome wave of the clerk's hand indicated the staircase—and the descending magnate.

"Ah! To be sure—himself!"—and the florid clergyman rushed to the foot of the stairs, reaching upward both hands with a great cry of heartiness:—"Williamson! My dear Williamson—welcome home to us!"

The gloom of grandeur deepened on the Australian brow.

(With hauteur) "Sir?"

"My dear old fellow—how glad I am to see you back!" The clergyman beamed with warmth. The magnate stiffened with frost.

(Icily) "To what am I to ascribe this honour?"

"Why surely, dear chap!—You haven't forgotten your old pal, Ward?"

"Ward? Ward?—The name escapes me."

"Charlie, you know!"

"No, sir! I *don't* know.—I must ask you to let me pass."

Then a ray of deviltry gleamed in the pastoral eye:—"Not till you give me the password!"

"Password! What *is* this—bunco nerve?"

"Nay, my friend! It's"—here the clergyman seized the magnate's arm, and "whispered low" in his ear:—"Burphy's Preserve!"

At this, the gloom of grandeur was shattered by a sudden sunburst, and the ice cracked with a roar.—But just at that moment, timed dramaturgically to his cue in the wings, entered the "*Author*" of the plot—with "Steele nerve shaken." Whereupon the two Dublin fishermen, handcuffing their long-lost prize, walked off with him, arm in arm, to the Fifth Avenue bar.

"WHOA, EMMA!" AND A RUNAWAY ACCIDENT

A vista of the last day of this Dublin summer is one of my earliest memories of three-and-a-half years old. In an open three-seated "carry-all," crowded with family, children and luggage, we are just starting on the long drive to Keene Station. Seated on the lap of my Spanish nurse, Nettie, I can still hear the crack of the driver's whip, in the crisp autumn wind, as the double team of horses dash down a leafy ravine, while—in rhythm to their motion—my own voice joins with my brothers' in singing the loud-lilted refrain of

"Whoa, Emma! Whoa, Emma!

Why do you put me in such a dilemma?"

Close to this memory hovers another of a dashing carriage—this time of a narrow, covered buggy. I am snuggled between an old lady friend and my mother, who is tightening hard the reins of a blinderless horse. Over the edge of a hill road, the horse is plunging wildly downward. . . . Then—under a great elm by a stone wall, lying close to its trunk,—I see a man in a golden meadow, carrying a heavy pail . . . then a sopping of my face—and a bright-red glimmer of blood.

The basis of that recollection is thus recorded—in the earliest newspaper reference to this biographer—printed in the

"Stamford Advocate, Friday morning, October 4, 1878."

"ACCIDENT!"

"Wednesday evening, as Mrs. MacKaye, her youngest boy, and an elderly lady, were driving through Darien, the horse driven ran away,

and threw out the occupants of the carriage. The little boy received a severe cut over the eye. The elderly lady was somewhat bruised, while Mrs. MacKaye was most seriously hurt. Striking on her head and shoulders, she received a terrible shock. It cannot even yet be determined accurately the extent of her injuries. The carriage was badly damaged, and the horse somewhat cut. The lady most injured is the wife of Mr. J. Steele MacKaye, of *Won at Last* fame."

This accident, with its narrow escape from death, was harbinger of a series of anxieties for my father during a next twelvemonth of increasing cares. These were doubtless brought upon him by some of his enthusiastic extravagances, an habitual tendency which had been instilled—as we have seen—in his early youth, by his then "recklessly indulgent" father.

FEUDAL "RETAINERS"; PRINCE MEGATA; WALLACK'S YACHT

In these Stamford days, Steele MacKaye took joy in stocking his stables with high-mettled horses, for carriage and riding, and his poultry yard and pigeon-cotes with splendid Andalusian fowls and fancy-ruffed pouters. For his growing boys he fitted out a bowling-alley, and a carpenter's shop, equipped with varied sizes of hammers, planes, saws, files, and delicate tools, all graduated in scale to trim cabinets, with choice wood materials for the skilled carpentry in which he loved to instruct them. Beside these were bows and arrows, for archery, targets for rifle practice, assortments of boxing-gloves, fine-graded tools for gardening.

These extra-household departments fell mainly under the dominion of those itinerant tramps and dependants whom he enthusiastically appointed to the posts of coachman, gardener, night-watchman, etc. In consequence—during his enforced absences on theatrical and lecture tours—these feudal "retainers" helped themselves bountifully to the stock and investiture of lofts, barn, cribs and cabinets, to the prosperity of their respective pawnbrokers, and to light-hearted revelries of their own in those dim unprohibited days—toasting their absent lord in the wine of his own cellarage. Of these sub-lords of the stable I remember in particular, Dan Kelly, the ex-tramp and coachman, whose acme of expertness was to kick the stall ceiling, with both feet, in an amazing aerial double-shuffle.

Driven by the same Daniel in the "span" carriage with my father, I recall the crunching rhythmic singing of iron wheel-rims in the sands of Shippan Point—a sunny gleam of the blue Long Island

Sound—and the glimmering masts of “Yollock’s watt”— a magic word of child nomenclature, translatable as “Wallack’s yacht,” wherein my father held many cruising conferences with that genial potentate of theatre managers.

Not only feudal “retainers,” but real feudal “princes” occasionally frequented our Stamford home. There came for a fortnight’s visit Baron Tanetaro Megata—known to his American friends as “Prince Megata.” The very first student ever sent by the Imperial government of Japan to America, a graduate of Harvard in 1874, Megata later attained to highest honors in the House of Peers, at Tokyō, where he died Sept. 10, 1926.*

But these vistas of my father’s avocational life must give place to his vocational thoughts and activities.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ORATORY: RALPH WALDO EMERSON, ETC.

During the autumn and winter of 1878-’79, while continuing his own school in New York, MacKaye gave a course of twelve lectures at the Boston University School of Oratory, which preceded the later Emerson School, founded by Dr. Charles W. Emerson, a pupil of Prof. Monroe. In a prospectus of the school, “20 Beacon St., Boston, 1878,” are lists of its personnel, which give evidence of its distinctive standing at that time. On the faculty are listed, amongst others:—“William F. Warren, LL.D., *President*; Lewis B. Monroe, A.M., *Dean*; A. Graham Bell,† *Mechanism of Speech*; James T. Fields, LL.D., *English Literature*; James Steele MacKaye, *Æsthetics and Dramatic Art*—As Associate Lecturers were Ralph Waldo Emerson (on Eloquence and Oratory), Dr. William Rimmer (on Anatomy of Expression), Henry Ward Beecher, etc.—On the Board of Visitors were A. Bronson Alcott, Mary A. Livermore, Phillips Brooks, etc.

Among the listed students were:

“Georgia Cayvan (Advanced Class, Boston),” afterwards distinguished as an actress; “Samuel Silas Curry, A. B. (Senior, Boston),” later head of the Curry School of Expression; “Franklin Haven Sargent, A.B., Harvard Col. (Junior, Boston),” afterwards President of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, New

* “Dear Mr. MacKaye,” he wrote (from Boston, February 4, 1878), “I shall be very happy to see you and your brother-in-law, Baron von Hesse, before his departure for Japan and I have the pleasure to send you for him my letter of introduction. Please remember me kindly to your family. I am—Very respectfully yours—*Tanetaro Megata*.”

† Inventor of the telephone.

York City. Of these, Dr. Franklin Sargent wrote, for this memoir, before his death in 1923:—

FRANKLIN H. SARGENT "WALKS BOSTON COMMON AT SUNRISE"

"In 1878, when I was a student in the School of Oratory, Boston University, Prof. Lewis B. Monroe, founder and dean of the school, announced to the students one day that we were to have a series of lectures on the *Philosophy of Expression* by Steele MacKaye. I had no knowledge then what this meant, or who Mr. MacKaye was, except as a name.

"The entire school was assembled one morning, with notebooks and pencils, when Prof. Monroe came down the aisle, followed by one of the most noteworthy personalities I have ever seen—a tall, remarkably well-built man, with dark flowing hair, a graceful yet manly carriage and movement, an impressive dignity, and an intellectuality that shone from his extraordinarily expressive features. . . . He stood before us, illustrating, in his very demeanour, the principles of the philosophy which he began to expound. The very sound and convincing power of his voice and speech, his every movement, revealed to me more than any other personality has ever revealed to me. What he said was so condensed, so profound, so learned, that I found real difficulty in fully comprehending it all. At the same time, I recognised there was great thought, great science, throughout.

"So I took rapid notes, filling my notebook, and when, at the close, Steele MacKaye left us, I found myself left alone in the hall, meditating the profundity of his discourse, overflowing for me with revelations. As I walked into the dean's private office, I asked: '*Prof. Monroe, what is this?*' And I shall never forget the patriarchal old man, with his white hair, and glowing face, as he looked up at me and said, '*My boy, this is the key to the universe!*'

"I went home and spent that evening in study of my notes, and became so deeply interested that I sat up all night, without resting at all, and in the morning walked out on Boston Common at sunrise, still meditating upon the great words of a new wisdom that I had heard from this wonderful man, Steele MacKaye. . . . I became a complete devotee. The rationale of expression which I thereafter followed in my teachings at Harvard University, and subsequently in my position as dramatic instructor at the Madison Square Theatre, was founded strictly upon those first glimpses of profound truth, which I had obtained from the twelve lectures given by Steele MacKaye in the Boston School of Oratory." *

JOSEPH JEFFERSON AND MACKAYE: "OIL PAINTS AND GREASE PAINTS"

It was about this time that a cordial, enduring friendship grew up between my father and Joseph Jefferson, the great comedian. They had in common not only their devotion to the actor's grease

* Cf., on page i, 457, Sargent's subsequent studies with MacKaye as his private pupil.

paints but to the artist's oil paints, especially in their enthusiastic practice of landscape painting. Each was frequently at his easel, and occasionally my father would drop in at Jefferson's studio in Hoboken, New Jersey, to compare notes and ideas in prolonged conversations on art. A memento of one such occasion survives in a little pencil sketch of his which he gave to my father.* On the back of it, Jefferson jotted down this aphorism of his own; in souvenir of their talk together:

*"A landscape should contain strength without blackness,
Delicacy without weakness,
Form without harshness,
And spirituality without vagueness."*

On another occasion, Jefferson gave my father a large oil-painting by himself (now owned by the writer), depicting a favourite subject of his, the semi-tropical foliage of a slow-meandering river. He neglected to sign it, however; so years afterwards—while we were at Harvard College together (about 1895), my brother James and I took the canvas to him for his signature, when he was acting Rip Van Winkle in Boston. We found him in the large bare lobby of the old Parker House, sauntering about in an old suit of clothes, almost as ancient-seeming as Rip's in the play.

"Come upstairs, boys!" he said heartily; and we followed him up some long flights to his room door, where he fumbled long with the key in the lock.

"Well, well!" he chuckled slyly, with that unctuous quaver of voice which had convulsed thousands of audiences, "Now, if this were five in the morning, and the old woman just waiting t'other side the keyhole, with her crutch raised to baste me—not so bad stage-business—eh? this finger-fumbling!—Ha, there she is, waiting! Come in, boys, and meet my old woman—the only three-legged comforter I've got on the road to rough it with me. Yonder—with her crutch on the floor!"

And he pointed to a big wooden easel, leaning on one leg and holding a large canvas, surrounded with tubes of oil paint. This canvas he removed, replaced with the one we had brought, and sat down on a stool before it.

"Yes, yes. That's my brushwork. I remember this picture well. I gave it to your father in '78, at my Hoboken studio. Now watch me try to imitate my autograph!"

* Reproduced, as illustration, in this chapter.

Then, with lifted brush, he twinkled at us, and painted his signature in a corner of the canvas: "*J. Jefferson. '78.*"

"STAGE WHISPERS" IN A MOUNTAIN SOLITUDE

From about that year, or perhaps a year or two later, dates a childhood recollection of Joseph Jefferson and my father. It must have been at a *matinée*, probably at the old Star Theatre, where the first lower box on either side was separated only by a velvet rail-cord from the stage, which extended forward to the orchestra in a great "apron" that nestled the box in its flange.

The play is *Rip Van Winkle*. I am seated in the left-hand box, between my father and mother—watching, spellbound. The curtain has risen on a painted flat—a "front-scene," dimly lighted. Transformed by the enchantment of childhood, the bare boards have become the wild trail of a mountain solitude, where *Rip*, the tattered vagabond, is whistling wistfully for his dog, *Schneider*, calling his name in the night, to the answer of eerie echoings.

Now from a shadow emerges a squat, crook-legged dwarf, with peaked cap—the ghost of one of *Hendrick Hudson's* crew—carrying a round keg on his shoulder.

Rip shrinks back, in horrid awe.

The ghastly figure follows him, imploring with weird gestures of mute pantomime.

Rip draws away farther—fearful, yet fascinated, nearer and nearer to the velvet cord.

With long green finger the dumb ghost points to the keg. Low thunder rumbles through the mountain chasm. (In the theatre box, I clutch at my father's arm.)

Behind his grounded gun, *Rip* shrinks further back, crouching to one knee, and mutters, with hissed breath, across the velvet cord:

"Eh, Steele! When do we dine to-night?"

"Six o'clock," hisses back my father.

"Where?"

"At *Delmonico's*."

Then the bowels of the Catskills burst in volcanic thunder, like the clatter of a million dinner plates, and the chasm of terrible reality is split with forked lightning, confounding the demons of *Hendrick Hudson* with the diners of *Delmonico*! *

* From Hoboken, November 27th (year undated), Jefferson wrote to my father: "As soon as you recover and are able to leave the house, I shall be pleased to see you here. I will be in New York on Saturday to take my family to the *matinée* at the Academy of Music. We will be at *Delmonico's* at about one. If you are in town, drop in."

Delmonico's, the famous restaurant, was a special resort of the acting profession, and there, during these years my father nearly always dined when in town from Stamford, often with his children. From its windows he once pointed out to my brother James, then a child, the enormous hand of the Statue of Liberty rising upward from Union Square, on public exhibition there, before the statue was fully erected on its harbour island.

A NEW PLAY: WALLACK RELEASES RIGHTS: FIFTH AVE. THEATRE

My father's finances were now approaching again an extremely shoal ebb, and once more, that autumn, he was busy writing a new play,* in hopes of turning the tide shoreward with full cargoes. First, however, before an illusive prosperity floated in again, he was to pass through some black and needy months, charted in the family log as "The Narrows of *Through the Dark*."

The late autumn of '78 and the entire winter and early spring of '79 were occupied in preparations of this play, and in its elaborate production. To this end, my father entered into plans with James Crompton Schofield, for producing *Through the Dark*, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, of which Schofield is stated to be the "sole lessee" in a signed contract between MacKaye and Schofield, dated "this 27th day of January, 1879," and further signed by D. H. Harkins, "guaranteeing the fulfilment of all the terms of agreement" made therein by Schofield.—Harkins was then the "sole director" of that theatre, the very same which MacKaye had remodelled for his first production, *Monaldi*—called in 1872 the St. James, soon afterward again remodelled and renamed by Augustin Daly the Fifth Avenue. On the day of this contract (Jan. 27th), Lester Wallack wrote to MacKaye:

"I hereby release you from all obligation to me implied in our contract for the production of *Through the Dark*, and leave you free to dispose of the play elsewhere if it is to your advantage to do so. Excuse scrawl. I'm too ill to do any better. With best wishes yours."

From these documents it appears that, following upon the success at Wallack's of *Won at Last*, Wallack had accepted for production this next play by MacKaye. On account, however, of more auspicious-seeming plans in prospect at the Fifth Avenue, or for other more pressing reasons (probably financial), MacKaye ap-

* This play, *Through the Dark*, was probably the "new play" begun in January, 1878. Cf. his letter of January 12, '78, on page i, 281.

pears to have asked for his play's release. This, except for such reasons, he would hardly have asked from his old friend Wallack, the nabob of New York managers. The unprecedented action, nevertheless, seems to have caused a local theatrical commotion, recorded in a teasing skit by Nym Crinkle (*The Philistines in Council*) a few days later (Feb. 2) in *The Sun*.*

AN IMAGINARY DIALOGUE: MACKAYE AND CRINKLE AT TILTS

In this skit—a quite imaginary dialogue between *Anna*,† *MacKaye* and *Quatorze* (Nym Crinkle himself)—Crinkle wrote:—

“Anna—You deserve well of your guild, Mr. MacKaye. To take a play to Wallack’s is heroic; but to take one away from Wallack’s is godlike.

*...“MacKaye (modestly)—You everestimate me entirely. I understand that there has been something like a run on the Wallack play-bank, and Billy Floyd, his stage manager, has been paying out plays all day. My friend, Bartley Campbell,‡ of the whirlwind arms and inconsequent legs, tells me the scene down there is quite worthy the pen of Gilbert, and I hear he is going to make it into a burletta like *The Pinafore*, with the *Governor of the Queen’s Navee* telling his chorus of playwrights that they ought to consider it an honour to leave their manuscripts there.*

“Quatorze—I understand that Bronson Howard is depicted in the background looking beneficently on, remarking that it is the easiest thing in the world for Wallack to avoid this trouble. All he has to do is to hire somebody to cut and fit. ‘I dare say,’ observes Howard, ‘that several of these plays have rough merit. Mine did, but they must be polished and adapted in the box-office.’ Howard must be a singularly ingenuous fellow.”

Of this allusion it is worth remark, in passing, that it is a perennial, mischief-brewing habit of dramatic reviewers to form partisan cliques for or against outstanding dramatists, each journalist siding with his personal favourite and egging him on, by cleverly amusing innuendo, to envy or jealousy of his inferred rival. This temptation, in their own day, was not always escaped by such influential critics as Nym Crinkle and William Winter, in their pen-shafts at Bronson Howard and Steele MacKaye. Happily, however, in the case of these mutually respecting dramatists, the shafts

* William Winter also, stirred by curiosity, wrote at the time to MacKaye: “I should like to read your play before I see it acted, if that would be agreeable to you.”

† Anna Dickinson, actress, playwright, and a pupil of MacKaye. Cf., page i, 238.

‡ American dramatist, author of *My Partner* (Union Square Theatre, September 16, 1879).

slid off, harmless. MacKaye and Howard—though their busy lives gave them only occasional opportunity for personal fellowship—were always cordial friends.*

On Jan. 31, '79, the sterling actor, Charles W. Coudock, wrote to MacKaye this note portentous to his own career, for—though he did not act in *Through the Dark*—this reminder of “the profession” led to his engagement to act in MacKaye’s next production, and thus permanently to his success in *Hazel Kirke* during the remainder of his long life:

“My dear Friend—I see by the papers that your new play will be brought out at the Fifth Ave. Theatre, and if it contains a part that I can play, without displacing anybody else, have the goodness to remember ‘the profession.’—Best remembrances to Mrs. MacKaye and family!—Ever yours—C. W. Coudock.”

Through the Dark was suggested by the wide popular excitement and mystery occasioned by the kidnapping of “Charlie” Ross, a boy of wealthy parentage in Philadelphia. The mystery of his disappearance was never to be solved. At the time, however, the event was recent and public interest was running high—reasons of theatrical “timeliness” which, combined with pressure of his own debts and cares, may have led MacKaye to prefer an immediate production offered by the Fifth Avenue Theatre management to delay till another season at Wallack’s. The choice, however, did not prove auspicious and only deepened the “chiaro-oscuro” of his struggles.

FIRST MORNING AND “FIRST NIGHT”: *THROUGH THE DARK*

A vista of these—dark prospects shifting momentarily to bright—is glimpsed by these words to him, written by my mother, from Stamford (Feb. 17th):

“I am half wild with anxiety about our affairs and the play. My heart is full to bursting. God help and strengthen you, my poor boy!”

The next morning, came this reply—by telegraph: “All goes well. Piece produced moment I decide. Splendid cast.”

About a fortnight later (March 6th)—ushered by auguries of imminent fortune, actual cashlessness, and last rehearsals for a

* Cf., on page i, 49, MacKaye’s championing of Howard as a dramatist and, on page ii, 219, their mutual goodwill in association with Stuart Robson’s productions of their plays.

portending "first night,"—my brother Benton beheld his first morning, starting at his birth, in Stamford, his journey toward that great Appalachian Trail of his "New Exploration" so kindred to the great quests of his father.

Four days afterward—with high hopes that this bright advent would put darkening fortune to rout—*Through the Dark* was produced by its author in New York.

CHAPTER XI

ORDEALS AND INVENTIONS

New York, Stamford, On Tour

March '79—Feb. '80

I. ORDEALS

"ONE MORE VICTORY FOR AMERICAN DRAMATISTS"

Through the Dark—FIRST PERFORMED AT THE FIFTH AVENUE Theatre, on March 10th, 1879—is termed on the programme "A New and Original Drama, by Steele MacKaye, in a Prologue, Five Acts and Eleven Pictures." These eleven "Pictures" comprised elaborate settings. In Act Third, the night-effect on the bridge was an experiment in stage realism, which MacKaye developed much further, nine years later, in his production of *Money Mad*, an entirely new play based on this earlier one.

The opening performance of *Through the Dark* was very cordially received by the public, as alluded to by this greeting to MacKaye (written from "Wallack's, March 12th") from a fellow playwright, Julian Magnus:

"My cordial felicitations on the genuine success of your play! The favourable verdict given on Monday night will surely be fully confirmed by succeeding audiences. *One more victory for American dramatists!*"

But the reviewers did not "fully confirm the favourable verdict" of the audience, judging from this comment of *The Spirit of the Times* (March 15):

"A BASSOON: THE PUBLIC CARES MORE FOR A ZITHERN"

"*Through the Dark*, produced after months of preparation by MacKaye, turns out to be a grand, gloomy and peculiar melodrama, which everybody pronounces too long and too strong, and the scenery of which everybody praises. It contains materials enough for two good plays. . . . Everybody wishes Mr. Steele MacKaye to succeed in this production, yet everybody feels that he has made a failure; not because his play is bad, but because it is misplaced and ill-timed, like *Spell-bound* at Wallack's, and therefore doesn't hit the public taste here; so his good work is as much wasted as if he were to present a Greek statue to an Indian tribe. *Thro' the Dark* is a 'bassoon,' and the public 'cares more for a zithern'."

To my mother at Stamford my father wrote, from 23 Union Sq.:

(March 11): "Mr. Pickett * will tell you how the first night went. Result as yet uncertain, but I have seen my play and know now how to vastly improve it. It was very kindly received, but marred by some bad acting." . . . (March 14): "Every one declares the play fine, but too gloomy. I am remodelling it. Keep your heart happy. Our precious new-born boy has come in the midst of troubles, but *every storm spends itself at last!*"

(March 27): "Last night *Thro' the Dark* made its last gasp, and went off in peace. I am grateful it is out of the clutches of the wretched 5th Ave. management. My nights are free now to work at teaching. . . . I am trying to arrange immediate revival of *Won at Last*, with Coudock, Du Sauld, Ponisi, Miss Stebbins, Wheelock, myself, in the cast. Give me a good new name for the play." †

The chief use of this production to the author, in the development of his theatre craftsmanship, was the opportunity which it offered him for some months of inventive experiment in stage effects, lighting and mechanics, for the artistic arrangements of tableaux and scenery, and for personal directorship of the acting company. As a financial venture it was a failure, which intensified an already dark situation.

IGNORING DEFEAT: NEW PLANS FOR "A MODEL THEATRE"

If *Through the Dark* had succeeded, MacKaye's plan was to use the resulting capital to establish a "model theatre" of his own, in harmony with the plans and dreams which had been maturing in his mind ever since he had confided them, in part, to his friend Alger, in his letter from England five years before.‡ Characteristically, however, the failure of *Through the Dark* made no difference to MacKaye in his determination to achieve his theatre at all costs, for throughout his career he never recognised nor accepted so-called "failure" as defeat. He simply ignored it and sought new paths to his goal. So, in the very moment of his failure, we find him negotiating the lease, and hopefully the purchase, of a little ill-starred playhouse, "The Fifth Avenue Hall," which—within less than a year—his creative resourcefulness was to establish as the most successful and uniquely significant theatre in the country.

In March, 1879, this playhouse was hardly more than a concert hall, situated in Twenty-fourth Street, just west of Fifth Avenue, on the site of the old Fifth Avenue Theatre, where formerly, under

* His secretary.

† Hopeful of a second crop of its first good fortune, my mother gave it the new name of *Aftermath*.

‡ February 21, '74. Cf. page i, 221.

Augustin Daly's management, Clara Morris and Fanny Davenport had had their early "glorious days" of success, before that theatre burned down. Here, clearing away the burnt ruins, Amos F. Eno, proprietor of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, had hastily built a small inadequate structure, as ill-equipped for a theatre as that other hall which MacKaye had renovated in 1872, and named the St. James Theatre. Again MacKaye determined to carry out a similar rebuilding. So he persuaded Eno to renovate it (in accordance with MacKaye's own plans) and to devote all rental charges to the renovations.

FIFTH AVENUE HALL: RENOVATED AS "MACKAYE'S THEATRE,"
RENAMED BY HIM "MADISON SQUARE THEATRE"

Seven weeks of that spring were occupied by MacKaye in these renovations of the tiny playhouse which, in rechristening, he would have named "MacKaye's Theatre" but for this perhaps-too-cautioning note written to him (from Stamford, April 1, '79) by my mother:

"My thoughts are with you day and night. Do think well before coming out with the name *MacKaye's Theatre*. If you were *not* to succeed (and how terribly uncertain are all things dramatic!) . . . It is beginning too confidently on a great uncertainty, risking all on a single throw. Simply *Twenty-fourth Street Theatre*, or *Drawing-Room Theatre*. Heller, you know, called it when he had it, *Wonder Theatre*.

"So any simple name will do as well to begin on—easily enough changed in the autumn (when all improvements have been made) into *MacKaye's*. These are words of wisdom. Oh, may the good God help you *this* time to your richly deserved reward! . . . The butcher wrote me to-day to ask if we could possibly let him have \$100 before April 10th."

The "words of wisdom" in this letter, very natural at the time, were heeded by my father, who himself chose the name of *Madison Square Theatre*, giving up any personal desire he had then to attach his own name to the playhouse. "In the autumn," however, became too late to rename it; for by then his own play and directorship had already successfully launched it as the Madison Square, by which impersonal designation it was known during the more than quarter century of its distinctive career.

Otherwise, during that whole era, the managerial title of "*MacKaye's*" would have stood beside "*Wallack's*" and "*Daly's*" in New York City, and would have clarified and impressed on the public mind those eminently practical capacities and policies of MacKaye

as theatrical manager, which were always fused with his so-called "visionary" characteristics as theatre-artist and reformer.

The first official announcement appeared in the press of Sunday, April 13th. An excerpt follows:

"MR. STEELE MACKAYE begs leave to announce to the public of New York that he has converted what was lately known as Fifth Avenue Hall into a Theatre, to which he has given the name of MADISON SQUARE THEATRE. For the opening Mr. MacKaye will revive his Comedy Drama, so cordially received at Wallack's one year ago . . . carefully revised in Four Acts, under the new title of *Aftermath*, or *Won at Last* . . . The run of *Aftermath* will be limited, as Mr. MacKaye will put in immediate rehearsal a new Comedy *."

For his new theatre MacKaye initiated new policies, artistic and economic, which roused much public discussion. Some of these plans, especially in relation to the profit-sharing interests of associated dramatists and actors, comprised a pioneering many years in advance of his time. Some of them are touched upon in the following published reports:

PROFIT-SHARING FOR DRAMATISTS AND ACTORS; "*SOCIETAIRES*";
"DELICACY, FINISH AND SINCERITY"

(The Daily Graphic): "Mr. MacKaye, in a lull of superintending his theatre workmen, said: 'My idea is to open a theatre where plays reflecting the civilisation of the day—its virtues and mistakes—may be rendered with a care and attention to detail characteristic of the French stage. This is my aim. I make no pretense of beginning with perfection.

"For this it is necessary, first, to get the best plays; next, to secure the same hearty co-operation from the artists as the Théâtre Français does in Paris. To this end, I offer all authors 25 per cent of the profits. No one, anywhere, to my knowledge, has ever before offered such terms to the dramatic author. . . . To those of my acting company who prove themselves most able and earnest I offer, in addition to their salaries, an interest in the yearly profits, amounting to 25 per cent, which will be divided among those whose conduct has won them the title of *societaire*. In this way I secure for my author a hearty earnestness in rehearsal rarely found upon our stage, hopefully enabling me in time to build up a form of dramatic art in America, which will compare very favourably in delicacy, finish and sincerity with the best dramatic art of France.'"

In thus emphasising "delicacy and finish," MacKaye had no intention of minimising the need of human passion, virility and wide scope of imaginative appeal in the actor's equipment. These quali-

* Probably *Masks and Faces*, by Charles Reade.

ties were so unconsciously a part of his own nature that he simply took them for granted, and worked for their refinement and focalising in the art of the theatre.

"'All this,' added Mr. MacKaye, 'is of course a matter of time. The performances we shall immediately give are merely to demonstrate the practicability of producing good dramatic effects upon a comparatively small stage. If we meet with artistic success it will justify the expenditure necessary to convert the whole building into a much larger theatre. . . . This spring we have added a proscenium, stage apparatus, changed the auditorium, rearranged the orchestra chairs, built up the floor and constructed eight capacious dressing-rooms and a green room. Fire arrangements are also very complete; the house may be emptied in 30 or 40 seconds. There are 416 seats, but during the summer we may change the entire interior of the theatre.'"

"A MINIATURE THÉÂTRE FRANÇAIS"; "AUGUSTIN DALY WATCHES
WITH INTEREST"

"Mr. MacKaye's intention," says another report, "is to establish a first-class stock theatre, and he hopes, if successful this spring, to organise a miniature Théâtre Français for next year, with *Sociétaires* and a staff of dramatists. . . . A good play, a good company, a good location, and a good manager, offer this metropolis an opportunity to create a bijou theatre, like the London "Prince of Wales," if they want it. Mr. Wallack says they do not want it, and determines to star. Mr. MacKaye has resolved to remain and try the experiment. Mr. Augustin Daly watches the result with interest. There is sure to be a Madison Square Theatre next season."

Such publicly were some confident announcements of this new undertaking; yet privately—"behind the scenes"—there was occurring a personal drama of racking anxiety wherein my father was far from "sure" there would "be a Madison Square Theatre next season." My mother has glimpsed this personal drama in the following recollections of her own:

DRAMA BEHIND SCENES: ALONE, AT DAWN, "WITH THE
SLEEPING TRAMPS"

"Oh, those days! In Stamford, at the time of Benton's birth, our staff and stay, Aunt Sadie, was very ill and chaos seemed come again. Once, coming in to the city from Stamford, I met your father on Broadway, before the new theatre was opened. He said: 'Mollie, I'm half mad. There's a man now waiting at the theatre, with furnishings and essentials, and he won't deliver them till I give him a cheque. I haven't a cent. The whole thing will go to smash before it begins, and all be a laughing-stock.'

"He went off, leaving me with the heart-sickness I knew so well; but he got the money somehow that time. Once again, however, he

came to a deeper hole, on the very eve of the opening. I was then in New York with him, at the 23 Union Square studio. We had sat up late. He had told me that, if again he didn't secure a certain large sum of money, the theatre couldn't be opened. It was then almost the opening night, announcements had been published. I rubbed his head, his back, till he was asleep. Then, with wide-open, staring eyes, I thought till grey morning.

"Then I stole from bed and dressed; stole out of the studio building; went and sat in Union Square till it should be a reasonable hour. I sat there with the sleeping tramps. It was early dawn and spring. I remember the *death in my heart* that the French tell about; for I had made up my mind to do (for me) a terrible thing. I would go and beg a friend to lend me money—an absolute last resort to one who had helped in former crises.

"So about seven (I must have been up before five), I took a car uptown to our friend's house. Every one was in bed. The maid had just opened the door, to sweep the steps. I went in, awakened the one I came to see. But the friend was obdurate—refused to advance a cent. I was on the point of leaving, utterly exhausted and despairing; then suddenly—at the final moment—I turned back again, used my last ounce of resourcefulness—and *succeeded*. So the little theatre was opened, with *Won at Last*, revived as *Aftermath*."

In the park, opposite the great door of 23 Union Square (unchanged during half a century) still stands a stone drinking fountain, where the statue of a mother, fetching fresh water for her children, surmounts a circular pedestal of wide steps. The water is no longer gushing; but here, by night, the outcasts of Union Square still group on the steps in postures of forlorn slumber. As I have passed these by, with the heedless, hurrying crowd, the quiet, Madonna-like presence of that stone form above them has often recalled for me the foregoing story of my mother; and I have seemed to see her sitting there on the cold steps, "with the sleeping tramps," in the "grey morning" of a crisis which was to bring strangely to birth a noble dream of my father's enigmatic life.

That early dawn in April, '79, was but six weeks after the birth of my mother's youngest son. Without her dedicated thought and heroic act then, there would have been no history of the Madison Square Theatre, with its twenty-five years of prosperous ministration to millions of gay theatre-goers. By this financial crisis, unknown of course to the public, the opening of the theatre was postponed from Saturday, April 19, till the following Wednesday. Just before the first night, Nym Crinkle wrote:

"Nobody but a serious believer in the drama, and the public tone of it, would have undertaken the rehabilitation of the 'Twenty-fourth

Street house. The merit of Mr. MacKaye's purpose is, above all else, an art purpose. I shall wait with interest to see if a manager with an æsthetic idea, and a high dramatic ambition, will succeed in making society understand his aims, and in winning its co-operation."

"‘AFTERMATH’—ELOQUENTLY WRITTEN"; ITS AUTHOR—"AN ACTOR OF SIGNAL EXCELLENCE; AN EXPERIMENT OF GREAT TASTE AND SKILL"

On its opening performance, April 23rd, the revised play and new theatre were very favourably noticed by nearly all the critics. William Winter wrote in the Tribune:

"It was a kindly audience that assembled in Mr. Steele MacKaye's new theatre of the novel name, and broke forth into cordial applause at every opportunity. . . . *Won at Last*, now entitled *Aftermath*, long ago made its mark, and is generally recognised and accepted as a strong, tender, wholesome, well-constructed and eloquently written play. . . . In the art of acting, Mr. MacKaye is, to be sure, overmuch inclined to elaboration, but *his performance is perfectly symmetrical, and at the pivotal points it leaps up into positive brilliancy—dazzling with its beautiful vividness of expression. . . . With him, the gesture always precedes or accompanies the word, and there is invariable harmony between the idea, feeling, movement, quiescence, look and tone.* He is, indeed, an actor of signal ability and excellence of achievement."

"Last night," wrote the critic of The Times, "Mr. MacKaye received encouragement to inspire him to go on. . . . The little hall of a theatre is a pretty place, brightly decorated, and very attractive; unfortunately, it is too diminutive for serious dramatic purposes; but of course Mr. MacKaye is making an experiment—unusually pleasing—of great taste and skill."

MACKAYE'S SOCIÉTAIRES AND PENSIONAIRES IN A "BANDBOX"

The following takes good-natured fling at the tiny theatre and its staff:

"A seven-by-nine 'Théâtre Français,' with no stage door, and 416 seats, is odd enough; but when the tiny scenery doesn't fit, and most of the furniture is painted upon canvas; when the gas wobbles, and the hero calls off the stage to the mechanics; even an art-inspiration fails to justify all! . . . Nevertheless *Sociétaire* Couldock plays *Prof. Tracy* so magnificently, *Sociétaire* Lamb is so very funny as *Major Bunker*, *Pensionaires* du Sauld, Le Claire, etc., are so perfectly drilled, *Probationaire* Agnes Loring* is so charming, though amateurish, that everybody who goes is pleased. . . . As for Director MacKaye, such judges and veterans as Nym Crinkle, Ashley, and Dumont sit fascinated, night after night, before him."

* The stage-name (suggested by my mother) of Genevieve Stebbins, a pupil of MacKaye at his "School of Expression," 23 Union Square.

FIRST LAUNCHING OF A "LITTLE THEATRE" IDEA;
INADEQUATE CAPITAL

Thus his new venture, in his miniature playhouse, was greeted with cordiality by press and public. Thirty-five and forty years in advance of the modern "Little Theatre" idea, he had then twice launched upon Broadway the ideal of a small-scale professional theatre, seeking perfection in art fed by wellsprings of an indigenous amateur aspiration and a synthetic culture wholly new to Broadway at the time—and still to-day a beckoning ideal of the future. Its imminent success in the spring of '79 was postponed by two immediate handicaps, summed up by the words: "too late in the season," and by utterly inadequate capital to sustain his undertaking till the following autumn.

ENTER THE "ANGEL OF DESTINY": TWINS ECCLESIASTIC AND SECULAR

This capital, however, was very shortly to be secured—from a source, as we shall see, of sombre import and tragic price to MacKaye's whole after-career—from one "oleaginously" anxious (by deftly playing the rôle of anonymous saviour to a desperate artist) to secure for himself the last "three ha' pennies and a farthing,"* wrung from the extreme crisis in MacKaye's finances at this moment, when apparently "too late in the season" meant ruin for his fondest dream—his own "model theatre."

Clothed in the protective colouration of an Episcopal gown, this financial "angel" of destiny now emerges on the scene of this memoir. Tiptoeing from a side door of the editorial room of *The Churchman*, he enters the stage in shadow, at left, upper wings. Bashfully hesitant, he blinks at the unwonted footlights, scans the desperate hero in the foreground, rubs shyly his reverend palms, with sacrosanct smile; then—finding his shadowy form as yet unobserved by the box-office public beyond—he as shadily exits behind the scenes. From there he pushes out, in his stead, his secular brother—a less bashful twin, who comes forward and succours the fainting hero, negotiates with the same a document, signed in secret, and tactfully holds the stage till his well-timed cue. At that signal, re-enter to him, in smoke of incense, the gowned "angel," unrolling the signed document as a scroll, whereupon—with Siamese bow to the public—the "twin" proclaims "itself" sole owner of the drama, the theatre and the hero himself, "world without end, Amen."

* See Prologue, page i, 8.

This much of forecast concerning the astute "rôle" of the Brothers Mallory—the Reverend Dr. George S., editor-owner of *The Churchman*, and his younger secular co-editing brother and associate, Marshal H., is potential in these excerpts of letters from my mother (in Stamford) to my father (at 23 Union Square) to neither of whom, however, at the time, was any inkling of future destiny apparent.

"FLOCKS OF CREDITORS": HORSES AND JEWELRY "INTO THE MAW"

("Monday eve," April 28, 1879)—"My very dear one, I shall pray for you ceaselessly. I see nothing else for me to do. As I look about the house and see the books, pictures and furniture, it seems as though something might be raised upon them;—but the shortness of time! Well, we are in God's hands—that surely."

("Thurs.," 8th May): "To my infinite relief Mrs. Bogardus* brought me news last night which seems too blissfully happy to be believed. Oh, how I have suffered in thinking of your suffering, my poor, dear heart. . . . Mrs. B. says she does not think that yesterday you knew how entirely Dr. Mallory had decided to enter into the scheme. I hope there will be no slip between this cup and the lip, but if all Mrs. B. tells me comes true, your wildest idea of happiness will be in a fair way to be realised. . . . Very pressing visits from the tradesmen here—whole flocks of creditors."

Further light on these excerpts is thrown by these later *Reminiscences* of my mother, written for her children:

"*Won at Last*, at the little theatre, was really successful, but not half enough to pay the fearful expenses, so everything went into the maw: Our horses and carriages, fancy poultry, etc., and all my pretty jewelry were lost for ever.

"WE WOMEN CAN SAVE THE SITUATION"; "THE DOCTOR"
DECIDES "TO GO IN"

"Oh, your father was at his wit's end, when Mrs. Bogardus—the 'Children's Editor' of Dr. Mallory's journal, *The Churchman* (whom our Stamford neighbour, Miss Louise Henry,† had introduced to us, and who was visiting us at Stamford that spring)—said to me one day: 'Mollie, I believe we women can save the situation. I am going to tell

* Mrs. Nellie Bogardus, the young widow of an army officer, was a new acquaintance, then visiting my mother at Stamford. In New York, she was an editorial assistant of Dr. Mallory at his *Churchman* office, and was shortly afterward married to him. She was the author (after the production of *Hazel Kirke*) of a book for children, entitled *Hazelnut and Her Brothers*.

† The daughter of Rev. Caleb Sprague Henry (1804-1884), author of *Satan as a Moral Philosopher* (1877), *About Men and Things* (1873), *Dr. Oldham's Talk at Greystones* (1872), etc. Miss Louise Henry, herself a felicitous poet and critic, is the sister of Rev. Francis A. Henry, of Morristown, N. J., author of *Jesus and the Christian Religion* (1916).

the Doctor about this crisis.' And so 'the Doctor'—Dr. George Mallory—was introduced, and—after a good deal of suspense—decided to go into the scheme for your father's long-desired model theatre." *

Thus Dr. Mallory "decided to go into the scheme" at a time when MacKaye had already fought through his artistic battle and won, as the following indications also suggest: †

"MACKAYE'S SUCCESS": "IN LESS THAN A MONTH—ONE OF THE LEADING HOUSES"

On May 10th ‡ appeared on the front page of the *New York Dramatic News* a large portrait of Steele MacKaye, with the following comment:

"To those genuinely interested in the growth of American art, it is not necessary to say more than that the portrait here engraved is that of Mr. Steele MacKaye. The real artistic success which this gentleman has made at his pretty Madison Square Theatre is sufficient reason for our presentation of the likeness of a man who has sacrificed much to his love of dramatic art in its purest forms."

On May 17th, under headline, "*Steele MacKaye's Success*," the critic of the *New York Mail* wrote:

"Artistically, Mr. MacKaye's success in his handsome little Madison Square Theatre admits of no question. His financial success has been reasonably good, and every lover of the highest in dramatic art will watch with extraordinary interest his future movements as a manager. The immediate position which his new theatre has taken, in the favour of the best class of playgoers, has developed in less than a month, so that *the Madison Square Theatre is to-day regarded as one of the leading houses.*

"As Mr. MacKaye has scarcely had time to reimburse himself . . . his company has concluded that the best way to evince their esteem for his justness and courtesy as a manager, is to offer him a benefit. In consequence two benefit performances, given by his fellow artists,

* "Dr. Mallory then soon persuaded your father (continues her statement), in your father's relief and gratitude, to sign the contract which later deprived us of *Hazel Kirke*, and which none of us ever saw, till the break with the Mallorys shortly before the law trial."

† These records, with the foregoing,—nowhere else available,—are here cited, because in some accounts of the American theatre the impression is given that the Madison Square Theatre began with the advent of the Mallorys, who are thus vaguely and erroneously credited with having shared in initiating its idealistic plans.

‡ On May 11th, came the following invitation from Jenny June (Mrs. Croly), President of the literary society, Sorosis: "Will not Mr. MacKaye join, with Mr. Whitelaw Reid, Mr. John Brougham, Hon. Robert B. Roosevelt, in attending our May party at Delmonico's?"

will occur at the Madison Square Theatre, on Monday and Tuesday evening, May 19 and 20, ending the season." *

SCHEMES *SUB ROSA ECCLESIASTICA*; MACKAYE'S UNBOUNDED
GRATITUDE

But no last hour benefit performance, however gracious, could wipe out, for MacKaye, the accumulated deficits and debts of many months past. So after its opening season—April 23 to May 20th—his first little Madison Square Theatre closed its doors, with an enviable public reputation, but no funds.—At this juncture appears the Reverend Doctor, *sub rosa ecclesiastica*.

The foregoing favourable press comments, with many others too lengthy to include, all voicing the general public acclaim of the young artist manager who had launched the Madison Square Theatre, now served to strengthen the speculative interest of the Mallory Brothers in Steele MacKaye and his teeming ideas and policies for making it a model theatre. Nearly all of these ideas and policies the Brothers will be seen proclaiming as their own—in a later chapter. In May, 1879, however, the Reverend Doctor had not yet perfected his tactics. Instead he betook himself to spinning a silken web of "Christian Charity," to the rhythm of a humble nursery song: "'Will you walk into my parlour?'" With this cheery expression of cordial hospitality he alternated a retiring reticence, which held his unsuspecting quarry in a flutter of palpitant suspense for six or eight weeks, till the contractual papers were signed.

While thus expressing his affable "sympathy" with MacKaye's dire straits of finance, and his "earnest" desire to assist MacKaye's ideals in art, Dr. Mallory strictly cautioned MacKaye to keep in secret confidence his ministerial interest in MacKaye's theatrical affairs. Such interest (he explained) might safely be published as connected with his brother, Marshall, a layman; but not with himself. For such interest on his own part as an Episcopal clergyman, and as editor of *The Churchman*, if publicly known, would be very likely to harm his reputation in the minds of "Christian" church-goers, a great majority of whom were deeply prejudiced against the whole world of the theatre and its "infidel vagabondage." As such prejudice was certainly a fact, and as MacKaye, though

* A few days after this comradely action of his theatre associates he was elected (May 26th, '79), to membership in The Lambs, the only actors' club then in New York, which his friend, Montague, had founded in 1874. Here he was soon elected Vice-President, or "Boy,"—to the Lambs' "Shepherd" President, Lester Wallack.

himself no church-goer, had no wish to harm an apparently sincere clergyman, or to offend his churchly constituency, he naturally considered Dr. Mallory's plea for silence entirely plausible, and willingly acceded to it.*

A "CLOSE SHAVE" IN CHRISTENING; COL. MACKAYE AND
"THE FICKLE JADE"

Touched with grateful enthusiasm toward the Mallorys for their expressed concern for his welfare, timed so miraculously to his great need, MacKaye poured out to them—and especially to his adept sympathiser, the Reverend Doctor—all of his accumulated hopes and dreams for his ideal theatre. So ardent was his sense of personal obligation and friendship towards his succouring "angel," that my brother, Benton—who as yet, in the *mêlée* of family excitements since his birth in March, was still in June unnamed and known only as "little Mr. Nemo"—now barely escaped being christened, in Episcopal pomp, by the name of the evangel himself. (This "close shave" of destiny remains a saving grace of retrospect!)

So the plans of MacKaye for converting the little Madison Square "into a much larger theatre . . . during the summer"† were submitted by MacKaye for capitalisation, to the Mallorys, who took the plans under advisement, while MacKaye himself was absent with his production of *Aftermath* in Chicago. During this interval the Mallorys—chiefly Dr. Mallory "unofficially" speaking for his "official" brother—undertook to open negotiations with Eno for the possible purchase of his theatre. But Eno, who before, in his terms, had been generously malleable to the persuasions of MacKaye, proved now to be "the hardest man in the City of New York"‡ to the "Christian" appeals of the "Churchman."

On June 6th, my father's birthday, Colonel McKaye, who had recently landed in New York from Paris, wrote to him in Chicago:

"My dear son, I am not going to write you any commonplace congratulations, only I will say that I pray God continually that your birthday may have many living anniversaries in the future, each one of them bringing to you a more propitious life. I only hope your good fortune may come to you in your Chicago production, but if not, then

* Public surmise of Dr. Mallory's connection with the Madison Square, in supplying its capital, leaked out fairly early, but nothing was publicly known of the actual contract with his brother (on page i, 367) till about New Year's of 1881.

† Cf. page i, 301.

‡ Cf., on page i, 309, item of "June 11th."

I hope you will give up all scheming with that fickle jade, the Theatre.
—Ever in faithful love, Your father, J. McKaye.”

Had Steele MacKaye confided then to his father the full nature of his financial crisis, there would have been no need for the Mallorys’ interposition, and a very different history would doubtless have followed for the Madison Square Theatre.* But his father’s closing allusion was unfortunate in rankling, by its old prejudice, an already sore spot of frequent controversy between them (permeating much of this memoir); for “that fickle jade, the Theatre,” so condemned by Col. McKaye, was dearly beloved by his son, whose proud mood of economic independence was only strengthened against filial confiding by this futile, affectionate warning of his father.

CHICAGO TOUR: AWAITING NEWS “FROM THE FRONT”:
TREPIDATIONS AT HOME

Aftermath opened at Hooley’s Theatre, Chicago, on June 9, ’79. During my father’s absence there, the newly enlisted interest of the Mallorys, on the home ground, blew hot and cold according to the tenor of despatches “from the front,” as is indicated by the quivering anxieties of my mother, in these excerpts of letters from her in Stamford, to my father, at Chicago, wherein I have underlined some points of special interest in retrospect—apropos of after events:

(Stamford, 8th June, ’79): “To-morrow you open. How anxious I shall be! I did hope I should be able to write you to-day with the certainty that all was well settled, but such happiness is not mine. . . . Dr. Mallory sent us word yesterday that we should have to wait till Wednesday. He told Mrs. Bogardus that you had promised to write him every other day from Chicago, and laughingly asked her if she believed you would. Now *do!* . . . We are so terribly behind, it is very hard to keep most of the duns at bay. Children all well; Little Mr. Nemo is lovely.”

(June 11th): “Dr. Mallory has just left us. *We have had a charming visit from him, and I like and admire him more and more. He said he had worked like a miner with Mr. Eno*, in order to be able to bring us some good news, but he could not settle with him. He says Mr. Eno is the hardest man (Sic!) he has ever met in the city of New York, or indeed in his life. He sees him again to-day. All looks uncertain, and *any man other than Dr. Mallory would, I think, be discouraged, but he does not seem to be. He is intensely interested,*†

* The Colonel afterwards expressed his profound regret at not having backed the Madison Square with his capital.

† Cf., on page i, 376, the Rev. Doctor’s public statement that he himself had no concern with the affairs of the Madison Square Theatre—but only his brother.

said twenty times yesterday: 'I would give fifty dollars to be in Chicago to-night!'

"He told *me* he had that promise from you to write him every other day, and asked *me* if I thought you would keep it. I told him I thought you would. Don't let him be disappointed! He sent off to the post office here early this morning to see if there was any news from you. He was distressed to receive none. Ah, my darling, what a struggle it is, in this terrible bondage of debt!

"(P. S.) About the Mallorys—they *would not like it, should you ask for any advance, and I would far rather suffer any inconvenience here than have you in the slightest way give offence there.* Keep account of every penny's expenditure. Your salvation depends upon it. Dr. Mallory again suggested this morning that if he bought the 24th St. house, he should fit it up for us to live in. *He is all goodness and thoughtfulness. Let us show ourselves worthy of it.*"

(Sat. night, 14th June): "Mrs. Bogardus has just come from New York with news of the distress of the two brothers. Not one word have they had from you since Tuesday's letter. Mrs. B. says they are deeply hurt and grieved. This coming week is very critical. Eno has almost accepted their offer. *The Mallorys (especially the Doctor) are not ordinary men. Thoughtfulness, attention is very grateful to them, and the lack of it they cannot forgive.* I am sure there must be some good explanation, but I am almost crazed, being so in the dark regarding your delay in writing them. Write and telegraph them *daily!*"

(June 15th): "I wrote you yesterday what must have seemed a very incoherent letter. I was unutterably miserable. *Mrs. Bogardus brought me such news of the Mallorys' disappointment* at not hearing from you. What they want is *figures*—the receipts—and I think I know the truth: the figures are so small you do not like to send them. But write or telegraph *every* day, whether you have good or bad news. The trouble comes from your not understanding *the nature of these men. They have a sensitive side.*"

"THESE MEN" ARE "SENSITIVE"; "TELEGRAPH DAILY"

(16th June): "Do forgive my worrying letters. I have been as near distracted as I ever want to be. *Mrs. Bogardus begged me to ask you to telegraph or write daily.* . . . Your letter just come. I am smitten at the additional misery my letters must have given you. Strange you should have such poor houses, but I doubt not the weather and the evidently wretched outside management have a deal to do with it. Your notices are superb.

"Your father spent Sunday with us, and was very kind and sweet. He left \$50, which will pay our way till you come back and can see what is best to be done. *You do well to take nothing for yourself from the Mallorys.* . . . The boys were very much touched by your letter—enough to make one adore you, if possible, more than ever. Through such deep waters as we have passed—are passing—you, most of all! *It ought to be rich payment for a world of happiness in the*

future. . . . Once more forgive me, but no less send figures to the Mallorys—be they small.”

(Wed., 18th June): “The 24th Street house has been secured, Dr. Mallory says, and he says *Mr. Eno talked more like a Christian* at the Mallorys’ last interview, Monday night. . . . *Dear Mrs. Bogardus, who is our good angel*, says the Mallorys won’t give up the plan. She says you must be *prompt and exact*. You are on trial, you know, and the Mallorys are very particular about *little matters*: *You will do wisely not to take your salary*. . . .

(Wed. night): “We have just had our daily bulletin from Dr. M., with the cheering news of your increase in receipts. He also says you are considering a proposition about going to Minnesota. Do consider well! . . . If you could be here, I believe the New York plan would go through: *If you were here!* But if you go away for another week—with only expenses paid, or an actual loss—I am fearful the whole New York scheme may fall to the ground. Can’t you find out whether *that detestable Pinafore has got to that far-off spot?* Do look long before leaping! . . . Delighted you telegraphed the Mallorys. That’s right, *every day, without fail, good or bad*. 160 is better than 99. Courage! God help and bless you.”

(Thurs., 19th June): “Cheering news from New York. *The Mallorys are so pleased at your telegraphing daily! Keep that up*. Mr. Eno has made an offer, and is to be seen to-day. So glad receipts increased for Wed. night. Oh, how I wish the whole city of Chicago would rush to the theatre! . . . I hope your heart is lighter to-day, dearest. I do believe it will be in the end—*Won at Last—Through the Dark!*”

The above glimpses of trepidant solitudes on my mother’s part conclude with these notes to her from my father in Chicago:

(June 18, ’77): “I have written 6 or 7 letters, sent all notices both to you and Mr. Mallory, and telegraphed a small fortune away. I go back to New York next Sunday, *but not to influence Mr. Mallory in the least: I cannot and will not take that responsibility*. I have been seeking a moment to work on a new play, but it has been simply impossible.”

(June 21): “Your last letters have brought some relief. I should be very wretched, if I did not know I had done my best, and had it all to do. Any ordinary boy would have been of as much assistance to me as Dan Hopkins. . . . It is raining fearfully. I must hurry off and dress for the *matinée*, to play to half a dozen people.”

But such personal anxieties did not wholly fill his mind, in Chicago, under these straits. Among the “notices sent to Mr. Mallory” was one (mailed June 15th) in the Chicago Tribune, containing a long interview with MacKaye, setting forth his militant ideas on the function of stage art, schooling, endowment, civilisation. In it he said to his interviewer:

"If public schools are a benefaction, if medical, divinity, music schools are essential to the progress of mankind, then dramatic schools should have been established long ago, because no factor in civilisation wields a more powerful influence than the art of the theatre. . . . From politics in this country there is no hope for art. The higher functions of government have not yet been reached under our present system. Here, as yet, Art's only hope must lie in the public spirit of individuals among us—wealthy men, such as devote enormous sums to endowing universities.

"If for the actor's art, by some such opportunity, men like Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, William Warren, Lester Wallack, Dion Boucicault, could be brought together, each contributing his experience to the education of stage aspirants, in ten years we should probably have in our own country the finest corps of artists in the world. If we could command the same facilities for culture as exist in France—where every actor at the Français before his début is drilled for three years by a master like Régnier, Bressant, or Got—we would quite equal France in delicacy, and excel her in virility and power."

With a letter "of the 15th" from MacKaye, a copy of this interview in full was received by Mr. Marshall H. Mallory, in New York. In what respect the recipient entered into and "adopted" the eager "views, hopes and ideas," therein expressed, the reader may judge from this answer, written from the office of *The Churchman*, 48 Lafayette Place, New York, June 18th, 1879": (The italics are those of this biographer.)

"DAILY RECEIPTS" AND "OUR VIEWS, HOPES, IDEAS AND INVENTIONS"

"Dear Mr. MacKaye—Yours of the 15th is received, containing Tribune 'Interview,' and statement of receipts. *It was that statement of daily receipts which we were anxious to see.*

"Eno has finally made us a written proposition in due form but, as you may imagine, it is very 'hard.' Still *there is a gleam of hope*, but it does and will require much patience to complete any arrangement. He merits his reputation of being a *difficult man to deal with*. However, keep carefully your own counsel. *I wish we had been ten times as guarded as we have been in the expression of our views, hopes, and ideas and inventions.*

"I feel at present as if we might almost as well wait a year and do everything just right, rather than to hurry. But Jan. and Feb., in any case, will be early for us. The 'Trade Mark' is declined, so that lever on Eno is lost, and *only the moral right remains*. *It is possible we may defer further negotiations till you return*; therefore let us know as soon as you know when you will return, or—if you are to go elsewhere, then—when you will return. *We may be obliged to have you come here for a day, to complete patents*. But of that more hereafter.

"The weather here is delightful, yet Gilmore's Garden at 25 cents

is almost bare. Continue to do your level best, no matter what befalls, and let every day bring you nearer to your ideal. Truly yours, M. H. Mallory."

Within a fortnight of the date of the above letter, the writer of it had fully completed a contract printed on pages 367 to 370, which already he was "completing" for his unwary quarry—to whom, however, he now writes, with tantalising inertia: "we might as well wait a year." To MacKaye—harassed by debts, sanguine with creative dreams and tugging at his leash to pursue them—such provocative coolness would, of course, admirably serve the purpose of causing him to sign almost any terms rather than risk the delay of "a year" (to his impatience—a *century*!) before attaining his life-desire.

"We (the brethren Mallory) may be obliged to have you come here for a day—to complete patents"—of which "*more hereafter*." (This "*hereafter*" soon saw said patents *completely* assigned to Mallory.) To all of which is added the admonishment: "*Keep carefully your own counsel!* I wish we had been ten times as guarded as we have been in the expression of *our* views, hopes, and ideas and inventions!"

Such is the psychology of a type of commercial acumen. Already a state of mind was ripe for proclaiming, with full *legal* authority, said "views, hopes and ideas and inventions" of an artist as solely its *own*—by right of sole ownership "in, of and to" said artist, all his future brain-fecundity in art whatsoever, during (at pleasure of "the party of the first part") the remaining lease of his terrestrial life—as per contract, shortly to be signed and sealed.*

SUSPENSE: CONTRACTS AND DELAYS

The wording of this contract commences:

"This memorandum of an agreement, made and concluded, on this *first day of July*, in the year 1879, by and between Marshall H. Mallory, the party of the first part, and Steele MacKaye, the party of the second part, witnesseth:"

It concludes, however, with a *later* date, as follows:

"In witness whereof these parties hereto have hereunto set their hands and seals this *19th day of July*, 1879. Signed in presence of

* Cf. pages i, 367 to i, 370.

Francis H. Kimball *, and Marshall H. Mallory and Steele MacKaye.”

This hiatus in dates has its significance. Apparently the Mallorys had the contract ready to be signed on *July 1st*, before closing with Eno, for in a letter of July 2nd, my mother wrote to my father:

“Dr. Mallory writes Mrs. Bogardus to-night that the offer of Eno is accepted and the theatre secured.”

An interval still elapsed, however, before these business matters were actually closed. During this interval—after my father had returned from Chicago to New York, where tidings of the new theatre project had spread through the theatrical world—the following papers suggest the imminence of the project’s launching:

Excerpt of letter, July 7th, to Steele MacKaye from George Holland, distinguished actor: “I beg to make application for an engagement under your management during next season.”

Excerpt of letter, July 11th, to Steele MacKaye, from William Winter: “I assure you of my constant wish to see you successful in what you have undertaken, and my steadfast desire and purpose to aid, as far as I can, all your good works.”

Telegram: “New York, July 17th, ’79, to Mrs. Steele MacKaye, Stamford: “Everything positively settled with Eno. Theatre secured. Lease signed to-day. J. S. M.”

SIGNING THE SECRET BOND: “PRIME MOVER” AND “CAT’S PAW”

All then that remained to be signed (*two days later*)—was the formal contract between Mallory and MacKaye. The moment was perfectly strategic—while distinguished actors and critics were already waiting at the doors, eager to aid the author-manager in “all his good works.”

In fancy, one may yet almost hear the dulcet rubbing of palms behind the managerial scenes, and the web-soft solicitude of these imagined remarks to the iridescent lunar-moth there—fluttering in his filmy mesh: “Just your signature, my dear young friend, as a matter of memorandum. Only a moment—you must be tired out from your road-tour, and these legal forms are so tedious. So

* Francis H. Kimball was one of the builders (with Thomas Wisedell, of the firm, Kimball & Wisedell) of the Madison Square Theatre, then about to be rebuilt. Kimball (doubtless merely called in as a legal witness to the signing) was thus probably the *only* other person, besides MacKaye and the Mallorys, who ever set eyes on the contract until it was divulged, to bring into the courts, about a year and a half later.

happy to be the humble instruments of your lofty aspirations! But you quite understand, don't you? Discretion! Church connections—theatre—public prejudices—such a pity! So your absolute promise of secrecy—as far as this little memorandum is concerned! Thank you, thank you, *we count on it*—and you.

“To the public—you are sole manager and director, sign contracts with actors, builders, etc. We, that is, *he* (for, of course, *I* have no connection whatever, save in brotherly counsel)—We—I—he—will just sit in the background and *count*—count on you. Yes, yes—right there—next to the second seal—in this year of our Lord, 1879, the 19th of July. . . . Thank you again, thank you! Such a bold signature—verily, like John Hancock's, and signed in the same great month of Independence! Not at all, not at all, dear young friend—not a word of gratitude! We—he—shall sit humbly in your shadow, and count you as our chief asset in faith and works!”

On July 19th, the fatal secret contract was formally signed by my father, who *on the same day* signed, as “Manager,” several important contracts with actors and actresses.*

This much of detail I have recorded concerning the weeks of suspense leading up to my father's official association with the Madison Square Theatre undertaking, because this his signing of the Mallory contract (on which his association was formally based) proved to be the pivotal action of his whole career, deeply disjoining—by its fatal consequences—the steady evolution of his genius in the service of the art of the theatre.

Was such fate fantastically in his Steele blood? Often, with a smile of fanciful retrospect, my mother used to comment upon striking likenesses in the dramatic temperaments of Steele MacKaye and Richard Steele (and in “the Men they had to deal with”), as expressed in their letters to their wives—in accord with this note to his wife, Prue, from the single-hearted dramatist of old London:

(London, Oct. 29, 1708’): “Dear Wife—I am still kept bare of money by the Men I have to deal with, but as soon as I can get to town, I will send the Coach for you. Yr. obliged Husband & Humble Serv't, *Rich'd Steele*.”

* Among these contracts (drawn up through Wall's Dramatic Bureau, 14 Union Square), were contracts signed by Manager MacKaye, with Effie and Annie Ellsler, for their services, “from on or about Oct. 15th, 1879, for thirty weeks or more.” A few days later MacKaye signed a similar contract with Rose Coghlan.

In regard to the secret contract, my father afterwards told my mother that (at the time he hastily signed it) he had not even read it himself in detail, because of its lengthy labyrinths of legal verbiage. Later he stated, concerning it, in a published interview * :

"Being naturally inclined to trust those with whom I am brought in contact, I had no suspicion. . . . I only saw an opportunity to put my views into practice, to introduce certain changes that I believed would raise stage art to a higher plane. I had made myself personally familiar with every detail, mechanical and otherwise, pertaining to the stage. It had been the study of my life. The Mallorys put the whole thing on a footing of mutual confidence. They said they reposed a trust in me, as they did not wish to be known, and so I told no one of the contract. They explained that everything would be satisfactory, and that the formalities of the contract were mere matters of form to secure themselves, as they did not know me well. . . . Dr. Mallory was a prime mover—his brother but the cat's paw."

Thus the bond for his spirit's flesh was hastily signed, and as hastily forgotten by my father, in launching a strenuous wonder-year of dreams and the embodiment of dreams.

II. INVENTIONS

"JUBILANT PLANS"; "INVENTING DOUBLE STAGES";
WHIFFEN TO ENGLAND

Concerning this turn of fortune's wheel, my mother has written me :

"So for the moment, your father was again jubilant—full of plans and hopes, inventing double-stages, engaging and rehearsing his company, rewriting his *Hazel Kirke*, which he now entitled *An Iron Will*. Thus full of joy, though fearfully busy, he designed and superintended the second remodelling of the Madison Square Theatre (launched by him, the spring before) which he now completely rebuilt."

Thus there followed busy days, full of happy augury. In a diary, he jotted :

"July 16 ('79): See Gordon about patent; Telegraph to Clara Morris.† July 17: Miss du Puy (a pupil). July 18: Willie Winter to dinner. July 19: Whiffen and wife to Stamford."

* N. Y. Tribune, January 12, 1884. See also page i, 376.

† In August, '79, MacKaye was giving private lessons to John McCullough. In September came this note from the "great stage favourite" (then newly married), who, forty-five years later, gracefully declined a "popular night" in her honour:

("The Pines," September 8th, '79):—"Dear Mr. MacKaye—When shall you

Thomas Whiffen and his wife (née Blanche Galton) had recently made a great hit (as *the Monarch of the Queen's Navee* and as *Little Buttercup*) in the "detestable *Pinafore*" alluded to in my mother's letter as the all-conquering counter-attraction to *Won at Last*, out west. Whiffen had now been cast by MacKaye as *Pittacus Green*, in his forthcoming play, *An Iron Will*, with which he planned to open his new theatre in the fall.

This conference at Stamford was now held, to instruct Whiffen concerning MacKaye's managerial plans for securing, in England, the co-operation of leading dramatic writers, actors, and scenic artists, as nucleus of an English-American entente for his new institution. So commissioned, Whiffen was shortly despatched to London, where he made known MacKaye's plans and desires to Charles Reade and Tom Taylor, amongst others. Reade responded (later), promising MacKaye a new version of his *Masks and Faces*.* Taylor replied with this hearty letter (from "Isle of Skye, Aug. 16, '79"):

TOM TAYLOR OFFERS HIS "FIRST FRUITS"; RECOMMENDS FORBES
ROBERTSON, "LEADING JUVENILE"

"My dear MacKaye—Your letter has arrived in this 'penultima thule,' with a letter from Mr. Whiffen, enclosing yours to him for me. . . . How rejoiced we are to hear of your 'sunshine through the clouds'! How earnestly we pray that all your brightest hopes may be realised—that you may, at length, attain belle fame and fortune, and, *what I am sure you will value more, all of good elevation to theatrical art in the United States*. None can wish you all-good more heartily and sincerely than your friends at Lavender Sweep.

"I need not say how glad I shall be to be of any aid to you, either in the way of plays, recommendations, or any other matters, for your contemplated theatre. *You shall certainly have my first fruits, in the way of dramatic works*. I have in my head at present a historical drama on Prince Charles and Flora Macdonald, for which I have all the material. . . . As to Mr. Whiffen, I have sent him strong letters to John O'Conner, scene painter at the Haymarket, and to William Beverly, the master of all our scenic artists, asking them to do all they can to aid him in his choice.

be turning the light of your countenance Riverdale-ward?—Sincerely, *Clara Morris*.—P.S. No disrespect to my lord and master in the above signature.—Habit!—habit only!—C. M. Harriot."

During the first week in October, '79, MacKaye's four years' residence in Stamford came to a close. "I understand you are moving your family to New York this week," C. W. Couldock wrote him (Oct. 2nd), "and that has doubtless prevented my being able to see you. When shall I have that pleasure?" "Any time next week," was the answer. "Rehearsals of *An Iron Will* commence week of October 13th."

* And other plays listed by him on page i, 350.

"As to a leading 'juvenile man,' I have had no hesitation in recommending you Forbes Robertson, who is painter as well as actor, and who has grace, fervour and imagination, far beyond any of the 'young men' on our stage. I am afraid he is engaged for the Haymarket, but, in any event, he may be of use to Whiffen, to whom I have given a letter to him. (Let him also look after Frank Archer *—the best 'heavy man' I know.) . . . I enclose a letter to your dear wife from mine. She shares all my earnest wishes for your success in your new undertaking, which must, we know and feel, lie so near to your heart. Heaven prosper it and you is the prayer of Yours always, Tom Taylor."

This affectionate greeting was probably the last ever written to my father by Tom Taylor, who soon after became ill and died in the following July. From London Whiffen cabled MacKaye:

"Engaged Hughson Hawley, scenic artist; Sir William Magnay,† juvenile; start Sept. sixth."

HUGHSON HAWLEY; "THE ELEVATED THEATRE"

Hughson Hawley, thus brought over from London to assist my father, remained permanently in America, executing distinguished designs and theatre decorations for two of his theatres and becoming a life-long friend. In the same Union Square studio which he then set up in 1879, I dropped in to see him in 1927. There I found him, still assiduously at work on his canvases—eager in reminiscence of my father, of whom he charmingly conversed through wreaths of genial tobacco smoke, amid a phalanx of fifty pipes.‡

Preparations for the new theatre, its double stage, etc., caused frequent persiflage in the press. At that time in New York the elevated roads were a recent innovation—hence the allusion of this comment:

"We have Elevated Railways: Mr. MacKaye's ideas, views, aspirations are all Elevated; he has devoted his life to the Elevation of the Stage—why, then, not call his new house *The Elevated Theatre*? Every train would serve to advertise it. One could go to the *Elevated* on the 'Elevated,' returning to Harlem thoroughly Elevated by the per-

* Archer had acted the *King* to MacKaye's *Hamlet* at London in '73. Cf. his statement on page i, 196.

† Cf., on page i, 320, "Sir William's" fleeting engagement.

‡ Recently Hawley has written me of my father: "Better even than his enthralling brilliancies—the qualities of his heart: a generosity, a hospitality, a wonderful forgiveness for injuries done him; in thought, as in bearing, nobly a gentleman: that was Steele MacKaye."

formance. Moreover, Mr. MacKaye is to run his stage on the Elevator principle: so that ought to settle its title!"

"DAN" FROHMAN, ADVANCE-MAN AND VETERAN: *AN IRON WILL* OPENS

At this time, in the far west, young David Belasco was staging MacKaye's *Won at Last*, with great success, at the Baldwin Theatre, San Francisco.* At the same time, in the east, there appeared as MacKaye's "advance-man" another among subsequent veteran managers—young Daniel Frohman who, after leaving work on the New York Tribune, had been a road agent for Haverly's shows. He was introduced to my father at Frank B. Carpenter's home, by an intimate friend of my mother, Mrs. Abby Sage Richardson, the mother of William and Percy Sage, later respectively well known as novelist and theatrical producer. She was a gifted scholar and author who, afterward, lectured on English literature in my father's School of Expression, and served, for several years, as play-reader for The Lyceum Theatre.

From my early childhood I remember "Dan" Frohman, as a genial friend of our family, later as a fellow member of The Players, and, of course, as the warm-hearted friend and keen-minded counsellor of all theatre folk (especially of the aged in the Actor's Home), still widely and highly regarded by the American public.†

On September 10th, 1879, his young "advance agent" wrote to my father from the Continental Hotel, Washington:

"Mr. Steele MacKaye, My dear Sir: Have closed with Ford ‡ for Washington, Baltimore, and Phila., commencing Nov. 3, one week in each town. Have done nothing with Oct. 20 and 27, as I shall go on to New York and see you Saturday. Very truly—*Danl. Frohman.*"

On June 10, 1925, Daniel Frohman, veteran manager, wrote to me:

"Dear Percy MacKaye—When I took *An Iron Will* on the road for a 'preliminary canter,' it was due to the fact that the company had been engaged, but the theatre was not yet ready to open in New York. . . . The road tour § of *An Iron Will* was financially disheart-

* Cf. page i, 278.

† "Steele MacKaye," Daniel Frohman wrote in 1926, "was my boss at the old Madison Square Theatre, where he produced, in Feb. 1880, his famous play, *Hazel Kirke*, which there made the then-longest run in theatrical history. I had been his 'advance agent' and Mr. MacKaye engaged me as the business manager of that playhouse."

‡ Cf. page i, 321.

§ Cf. D. F.'s letter Jan. 15, '80 on page i, 326. The route of *An Iron Will* was in sequence, Providence, October 27; Phila., Nov. 3 (two weeks); Balt., Nov. 17; Washn., Nov. 24; then one week on road (including Reading, Pa.,

ening. In those days any play had to have first a New York reputation for a success. When 'we' played in Philadelphia (Broad St. Theatre) a two weeks' engagement, our gross for the two weeks was only about \$2,000. When the play came back there, with the same company, *after* its great run in New York, it played to the capacity of the theatre for a fortnight."

AN IRON WILL OPENS, PROVIDENCE: "ONE OF THE FINEST OF AMERICAN DRAMAS"

"On Friday evening, October 24th," said a press report, "*An Iron Will* was read by the author before a private audience of dramatic connoisseurs and was received with enthusiastic approval."

Three days later, *An Iron Will* opened at Low's Opera House, Providence, R. I., Oct. 27, 1879.*

Concerning this very first performance of a play, afterwards to be acted many thousands of times, in various parts of the world, it is of interest to note these excerpts of a review, written by Alfred M. Williams, dramatic critic of The Providence Journal:

"The first performance of a new drama, entitled *An Iron Will*, was given at Low's Opera House, last evening, and proved a decided success. . . . The acting revealed a thoroughly trained, artistic corps of performers, who were as carefully finished in the minutæ of their acting as was the play itself. . . . As a whole, the play—admirably given, finely set—was very effective. *An Iron Will* is unquestionably one of the finest of American dramas, and should place Mr. MacKaye very high among the living dramatists of any country."

SIR WILLIAM MAGNAY CEASES: MACKAYE ACTS LORD TRAVERS

The *Sir William Magnay* mentioned in the play's cast, had been expensively recommended to Thomas Whiffen in London, as "a real lord of histrionic genius—a perfect gentleman of unblemished reputation, of an ease in highest society difficult to acquire in countries

Dec. 2); Brooklyn, Dec. 8, one week; then four weeks on road (including Troy, N. Y., Dec. 15, and Albany, Dec. 17 and 18; Holyoke, Hartford, etc., till Jan. 15, 1880)—eleven weeks in all.

* With Dramatis Personæ differing somewhat from its later reconstruction as *Hazel Kirke*, the cast of the first performance was as follows:

<i>Hazel Kirke</i> , the miller's daughter.....	EFFIE ELLSLER
<i>Marie Marteau</i> (known as <i>Molly</i>), the French niece of Dunstan.....	GABRIELLE DU SAULD
<i>Emily Carringford</i> , Lady Travers.....	CECILE RUSH
<i>Mercy Kirke</i> , his wife.....	BLANCHE GALTON
<i>Clara</i> , a maid.....	ANNIE ELLSLER
<i>Dunstan Kirke</i> , an old miller.....	C. W. COULDOCK
<i>Pittacus Green</i> , his friend, a hunter of heroes.....	THOMAS WHIFFEN
<i>Arthur Carringford</i> , Lord Travers.....	SIR WILLIAM MAGNAY

where there is no court circle." Duly engaged, he appeared as *Lord Travers*, at the play's opening in Providence. Unhappily his "histrionic genius" was not as duly engaging to a country "where there is no court circle"; so, after his second performance, he was carefully returned, still unblemished, to the "highest society" of London—with salary paid in full for the autumn engagement.

With this sudden ceasing of his "real" lordship, MacKaye himself assumed the imaginary lord in the play, for the rest of the week in Providence, where he wrote (Oct. 31) to his advance agent, in Philadelphia:

"Dear Frohman—The play goes superbly here now. I acted for the first time last night to an excellent house—four tremendous recalls. . . . I shall be in New York Sunday morning, and wish you would meet me there at my house. It will be impossible for us to do *Won at Last*. Hope everything goes well with the scenery.—In great haste, Yours always—Steele MacKaye."

In Philadelphia, after opening in the part of *Lord Travers*, while coaching B. T. Ringgold * to replace him in it, MacKaye rejoined the company at Baltimore, where the play opened, Nov. 17, at Ford's Opera House.

"The bitter cold weather," wrote a Baltimore critic, "made it a courageous feat to venture out. Notwithstanding, *An Iron Will*—if generally known—would attract overflowing houses. As with *Pinafore*, when first given here, this new drama has fallen flat in attendance. But like *Pinafore*, so *An Iron Will*, when brought back here from New York and Boston, will be admired and flocked to as the work of high art it really is. Apparently our enterprising Manager Ford is relegated to the negro minstrels, to pay expenses at his Grand Opera House."

MANAGER FORD EXPLODES FROM A SICK BED; "DELSARTE PLUTONIC MYSTERY"

"Enterprising Manager Ford," then over sixty, had his own Grand Opera House in Baltimore and in Washington, where the association of his name with that of Abraham Lincoln will permanently link his memory with an epoch, wherein he was long an outstanding theatrical figure.

"John T. Ford (Daniel Frohman † writes me) used to have a stock

* On this tour later (Dec. 18) Ringgold's mother died and—to enable him to attend her funeral—MacKaye dashed from New York to Albany, to act *Travers* again.

† "Dear Frohman," wrote Ford himself regarding *An Iron Will* (in October, '79), "I should like to fill in as follows: October 13th, Phila. (before Booth), two weeks travelling in Penn., two weeks Balt. and Wash.—Nov. 3 and 10. If this will do, advise me immediately and oblige Ford."

company in both his cities, for stars travelled minus a company in those days, and were supported, in all towns on tour, by each resident company, which was usually 'up' in the standard repertoire. Ford covered considerable southern territory—Richmond, Charlestown, Norfolk, etc. He would take Booth, for instance, and send him on such a circuit with his (Ford's) company as support. He was an intelligent showman. As young men, Joe Jefferson and other (afterwards) big men were among his company."

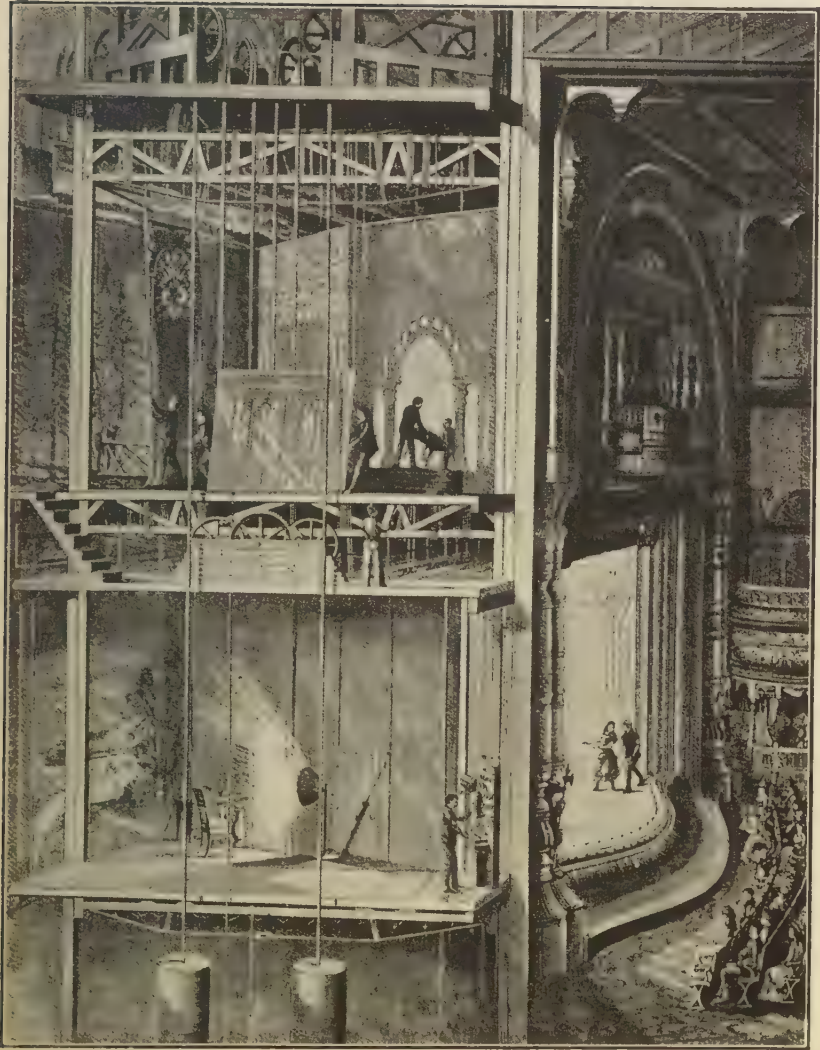
Taken ill from "the bitter cold weather" of the first night, Manager Ford (later in the week) exploded from his sick bed in an epistle to the press of Baltimore, here worth recording for its characterisation of that old-time commercial manager, ardent with respect for sincere art and his professional pride in it: the same enthusiastic character of the American theatre, who seventeen years before had offered a job of "leading juvenile" to the Seventh Regiment "boy," Jim McKaye, on witnessing his first Baltimore performance of *Hamlet*. "*Just Once!—Manager Ford to the Public*"—is the headline of this epistle:

"Messrs. Editors: Kindly permit—'*just once!*'—a few words from a manager, who has striven for a quarter century to please the lovers of dramatic art in Baltimore. In regard to Mr. Steele MacKaye's new play . . . probably no better modern play has ever been given in Baltimore, more interesting, more amusing, or more genuinely effective. The language is of the simplest, tersest, purest English. No better combination of artists in America could be assembled to act it. The comedian is a worthy reminder of Jefferson. The heroine has no equal of her age on the boards. The old man outranks, in pathetic power and artistic taste, any living actor of his grade. The author, a scholar, an artist, directed the rehearsals, and the scenery challenges special admiration. Yet with all these undeniable facts, the play has not secured the public patronage awarded to the veriest trash.

"I do not appeal in my own interest. I have too often met loss in going as high, and found gain in going as low, as I dare—so perhaps I deserve, commercially, at least, to suffer. But when such an artist as Mr. MacKaye comes to Baltimore, to give the very best work the stage can offer, I feel I have the right to call his work to public attention, and to ask at least that, when he goes from us, he shall not wish to shake the dust from his feet! . . . I write from a sick bed. . . . Respectfully yours—J. T. FORD."

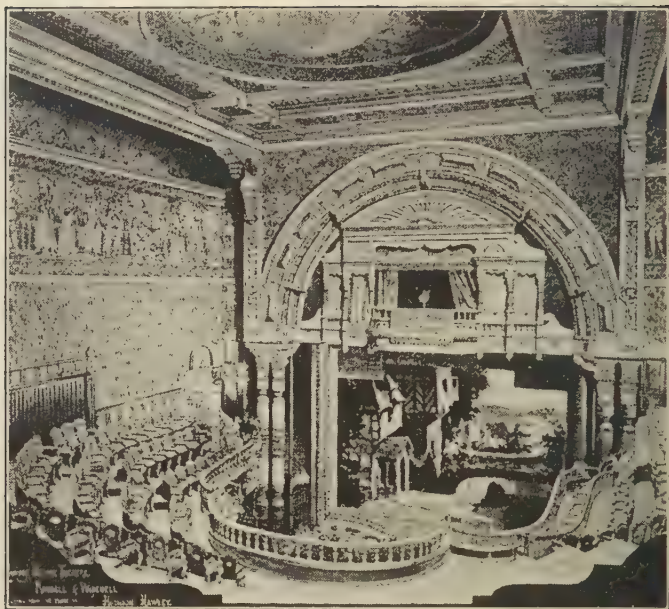
In Washington, the next week, the critic of *The Capital* took issue with Manager Ford:

"If MacKaye's 'comedy-drama' had been written a hundred years ago, it could claim the indulgence due to the old school of comedy.



STEELE MACKAYE'S "DOUBLE STAGE" IN USE

The first movable mechanical stage, this invention of MacKaye was patented by him in 1879. The above illustration, from an old Scientific American, shows a section of the Madison Square Theatre, with one tier of the elevator stage being acted upon while the upper stage is being set for the next act. Note the (then) new process of lighting; also the places for musicians removed for the first time from the orchestra to above the proscenium. Cf. page i, 324, and U. S. Patent Office Specification at end of this volume.



MACKAYE'S MADISON SQUARE THEATRE (INTERIOR)

(Above)—Architectural drawing by Hughson Hawley (1879); view, from balcony, of Act First of "Hazel Kirke," set on Mac-Kaye's invention, the Double Stage. (Below)—Newspaper engraving (1880), showing Act Third of same, with view of Elevated Orchestra Pavilion.

As it is, it is a galvanised corpse, ingenious, clever, but—like *Clarissa Harlowe*—adapting the past to the present. Mr. MacKaye's talents are capable of a really fine play; the sooner he takes off this one, the better for his reputation."

Throughout the road-tour of eleven weeks, the critical notices were very favourable, but the houses poor. During this time, MacKaye went back and forth between the play on tour and his labours in New York City.

These labours, by their "mystery," offered theme for such as this, from The N. Y. Star under caption of "*The Delsarte Theatre*":

"For several years, a young actor has been seen throughout America with a system under his arm. He commenced to revolutionise the American stage by lectures in Steinway Hall. We presume the American people are now ripe for the system, for recently the young actor—amid great mystery—has been at work in Twenty-fourth Street, tunnelling the bowels of the earth to establish the new American theatre on eternal Plutonic foundations. . . . As the structure now approaches the circumference of the planet, we begin to recognise Steele MacKaye and his system. This time, we believe, he has struck hard pan—all the way (according to rumours in Union Square) from two to five hundred thousand dollars."

Partly to dispel this "great mystery," Steele MacKaye described in a published interview (Nov., '79), some details of his theatre's "foundations":

"THE FIRST MOVING MECHANICAL STAGE—1879"; "BLASTING A PIT";
OTHER NEW INVENTIONS

"In blasting out the pit, we came upon a vein of rock that ran under the Fifth Avenue Hotel. When one of our blasts exploded, we found to our dismay that we had torn away a part of the hotel's foundations. . . . To shore up the wall took time. Then, to get our pit deep enough *, we had to blast a long distance under the Fifth Ave., build new foundations to the walls and fill in with concrete. All this delayed us six weeks.

"The purpose of the pit?—It serves as a sink for the stages, which are hung upon immense Hervé trusses at the top of the theatre—engineering which involves the hanging and control of eighty tons.

"The chief advantages of my new stage invention are—to enable us to sort and distribute our scenery upon three floors, instead of huddling it upon one; to control the waits between acts, avoiding tedious delays; and to produce scenic effects impossible upon any other stage. But

* Digging the pit also uncovered a gushing, underground spring, which had to be pumped with steam-pumps while being walled out with concrete.

the stage itself is not the only novelty. The arrangement of seats is on a new principle; the orchestra is placed in a novel position; *the ventilation of the house by machinery* * *will also be something entirely new*—an immense improvement on anything now in existence.

"Great things seem to be expected from your management, Mr. MacKaye."

"I am sorry to hear it, for to accomplish *great* things in this field requires not only time, but the happiest combination of effort from *all* connected with the theatre. I have been much annoyed by articles heralding me as one who pretends he is about to create a Théâtre Français in New York. That is both absurd and unfair. The Théâtre Français is *what* it is, because a whole nation has cherished it for centuries. To expect one man to *begin* where such an institution ends, is obviously ridiculous.

"True, I aim to create the same delightful *harmony of co-operation* that exists at the Français; in a word—to make the Madison Square Theatre a happy home for the best artists in the profession, and an institution of fine art in the dramatic field. Of course, to realise my aims will require work and time."

Unprecedented then in the world, Steele MacKaye's new stage invention, known as "the Double Stage," was patented in his name at Washington, together with several other inventions of his for "Improvement in Theatre Appliances." Concerning this first moving stage † (the Patent office design-drawing of which is reproduced herewith), years later, the critic, James Gibbons Huneker, wrote:

"The double-stage, an invention of the fertile Steele MacKaye, anticipated the Munich revolving stage by years."

And the *Theatre Magazine* (May, 1925) stated: "Steele MacKaye had one vision far ahead of his time—his stage, which could be raised and lowered. *It was the first moving mechanical stage ever built*—contrary to statements which credit the Germans with the invention."

ASSIGNMENT TO MALLORY; REVISING HAZEL KIRKE; MY EARLIEST MEMORY OF A REHEARSAL; NINE NEW PLAYS

This patent for his Double Stage—together with all patents for his inventions of numerous ventilation processes, new lighting devices, etc.‡—MacKaye assigned outright—by stipulation of his "confidential" contract—to Marshall H. Mallory. From week to week, the theatre was expected to open (being publicly announced for Jan. 10th), but was still delayed by the reconstructions. From

* This then "entirely new" method of ventilation, invented by MacKaye, has since that date *attained to universal use* in buildings theatrical and otherwise.

† Letters Patent No. 222,143; application filed September 9, 1879. A complete technical description of this moving stage (involving a new system of overhead lighting) is given at the end of this volume.

‡ See also Invention Designs, at end of Vol. One.

Fig. 1

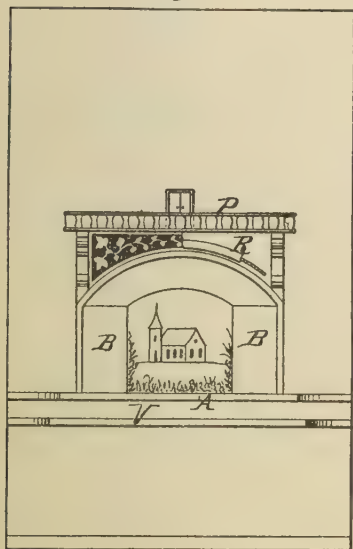


Fig 2.

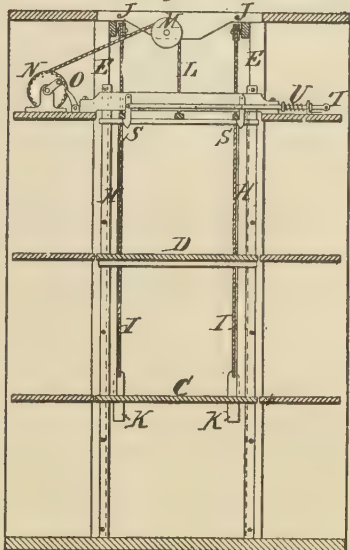
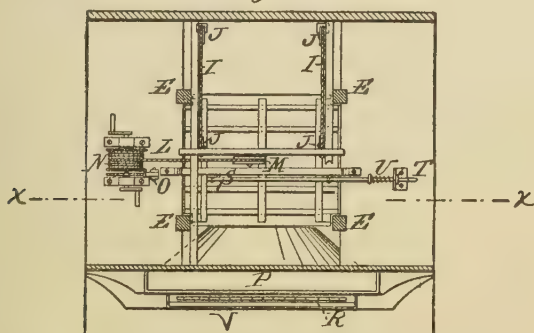


Fig. 3.



STEELE MACKAYE'S "DOUBLE STAGE"

From a specification of the United States Patent Office
included at the end of this volume.

Hartford, Conn. ("Jan. 15th, '80, midnight"), Daniel Frohman wrote again:

"My dear Mr. MacKaye—

Holyoke \$113.75, our share, 65%, \$73.29

Hartford 128 , our share, 60%, 76.80

"Same story. Enthusiastic praise, hearty commendation, usual press approval—but no business, tho' finely billed, with good pictorial, etc. *Mary Anderson and Denman Thompson absorb everything immediately ahead of us, and hold back every one when following us.* Jo Wheelock and Edgar in *Othello* here, last night, to just \$100. No more travelling for us on the road, till after a New York season!" *

Meantime my father was busily reconstructing his play for the New York opening and, as soon as the company returned from the road tour, he began rehearsals of the newest version. One of these rehearsals remains my earlist "professional" memory.

The dark-yawning interior of an empty theatre, viewed from a right, lower box under the proscenium—dusky forms moving in a vague beyond of the stage; from the dim middleground—a lithe black-haired figure, bounding with youthful energy across the footlights, to mingle with the other forms: in the foreground, close beside me,—a shadowy glimpse of golden hair, the half-profile contour of a lovely face and the near, happy sense of my mother's presence: These images, in one flash of recollection, record one of my earliest recollections, at the age of four, sitting with my mother, watching my father conduct a rehearsal of his *Hazel Kirke*, at the Madison Square Theatre.

During four years he had written at least four versions of it, *before production*. "Plays are not written, they are *rewritten*," he afterwards wrote in an article.†

One character in the play was now wholly remodelled and another inserted. Among the *dramatis personæ* of *An Iron Will*, was "*Marie Marteau* (known as Molly), the French niece of *Dunstan*," acted by Miss Gabrielle du Sauld. This part had evidently been adapted by MacKaye, in its characterisation and speech mannerism, to the proclivities of Miss du Sauld, whom he had formerly cast as the French adventuress in his *Aftermath* version of *Won at Last*. Now, in the forthcoming revision of *An Iron Will* as *Hazel Kirke* this

* Cf. D. Frohman's statement, page i, 319.

† Cf. page ii, 216. "Five times has this play been reconstructed," said Mr. Tom Whiffen on the first night of *Hazel Kirke* in New York, "and I assure you that I am playing an entirely new part." (*Spirit of the Times*.)

character of *Marie Marteau* was to appear wholly transformed, as *Dolly Dutton*. An altogether new, small part was inserted in the following way.

Another former member of the *Aftermath* company was Joseph Frankau. Hearing of the imminent opening of *Hazel Kirke*, Frankau rushed to the author and begged him for a part in his play.

"But there is no part left, my boy!" exclaimed my father.

Frankau was crestfallen.

"Never mind, Joe," twinkled my father, "I'll write one in for you!"

So, at the last moment, he wrote in the part of *Met*, to please his young friend; and so, as *Met*, Frankau appeared on the opening night in New York.* A previous announcement had stated:

"In spite of the great dearth of novelties at most of the theatres, Mr. MacKaye begins his season, at the Madison Square, with an unusually long list of strong new plays in the offing. Of these, the following are a few of the titles: *An Iron Will*, *Two Lives*, *A Silken Thread*, *A Fool's Errand*, *Hyde and Seeque*,† *Beauvoir*, *Paul Kauvar*, *Tom's Devotion*, *Greymoor*.

Of these nine listed plays, at least four were written by MacKaye: *An Iron Will* was revised as *Hazel Kirke*; *A Fool's Errand* (dramatised from Judge Tourgee's novel) was acted later by himself, in 1881; *Paul Kauvar* is the earliest public mention of his French Revolutionary play (first written in Brattleboro as *The Vagabond*, in 1875) not produced until 1887. Of a fourth play, *Hyde and Seeque*, I have a title-page, printed as a boy for my father by the well-known New York art-printer, Vechten Waring, on his first hand press in Stamford—1879.

Whether others among the remaining five titles are early works by my father I do not know.

NEW YEAR'S AND "OLD TIME-PIECES"; "TOO LATE"; COBBLING
FOR "THE MAN I' THE MUNE"

By this time, he was well settled in New York with his family, in an ample, four-story brownstone residence, at 107 West 44th Street,

* "Ever after Mr. MacKaye wrote in a part for me in his *Hazel Kirke*," stated Frankau (in the N. Y. Herald, April 15, '89), "and that play turned to a great success, I was called 'the Mascot of the Madison Square.' I never knew another man like Steele MacKaye. The spell of his will was wonderful over all who came near him."

† Cf. page ii, 66, footnote in reference to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

just west of Sixth Avenue.* Here the New Year had rung in his most momentous twelve-month. At stroke of "the witching hour," gathered round the old time-piece, that had weathered shipwreck from England after his *Hamlet* period, he and his wife and children had toasted "Clansfolk and Friends!" while over the gas-lit city the starry cold midnight was resonant with roaring horns of ferries and mysterious sea sounds.

Mingled with those far sea sounds, a later age of radio might have brought to their ears and hearts the rhythmic beats of another "old time-piece," in Paris, that already had survived the strokes of seventy-five New Years, and staunchly weathered some forty Atlantic voyages—still sending clan-messages overseas; for on that very stroke of 1880, old Col. McKaye, in Paris, was writing this note to "Jas. Steele MacKaye," in New York:

"My dear Son—On this last day of the year, my spirit is principally with you, and Mary, and the dear children; and so I write to say how sincerely and earnestly I pray 'a happy new year!' for you and for them. I have sent, via your brother William, \$50 to buy, for each of the children, some little memento of the love of their Grandfather.

"I am terribly anxious to know how the Madison Square Theatre goes on, how your play may succeed. . . . I heard of the fire that burned out Dr. Mallory's printing establishment, but the papers stated that he was fully insured. I wish you would snatch a few minutes to write me in full, and very frankly, about your own affairs and situation. Of course, you alone can write me of the *real* condition of things, and the prospects in the future. . . . Ever in faithful love, your father—*J. McKaye.*"

"The *real* condition" of his own affairs, however, Steele MacKaye could *not* then "fully and frankly" confide to his father. Already it was *too late*, by the six months since he had "walked in" to the dim "little parlour" of *The Churchman* and signed his secret pact; though he himself was hardly then aware of the tenuous web that spun him round—a web which to burst would leave his palace of dreams in ruins.

He had all but forgotten the pact and the keeper of the parlour. All oblivious, he (like John MacKay in the ballad) was "no in" to the "ha'penny-farthing" manœuvres around him, for instead he was ardently cobbling new winged "shoon" for his master—"the Man i' the Mune."

* The house, still standing (outside, painted white; inside, somewhat renovated) is now occupied (1927) by a popular restaurant—Keen's Chop House.

DREAMS IN STONE AND CONCRETE: A "BRAVE STAR" OF FELLOWSHIP

So, under the spell of that ardour, the palace of Steele MacKaye's dreams began at last to rise before him, "out of the foundations of the earth": Not this time—as at London, in '73—an airy-domed "*Crystal Palace*" of Shakespeare, conjured from the paternal pouch of "the old Scotch drake," to expand the soaring plumes of his strange swan-chick. But this time—a miniature "castle in Spain" of stone and concrete: the authentic product of his "co-ordinating ideas" and experience, gradually "*won at last—through the dark*" by his own *iron will* and invention, raised out of the blasts and steam-drilling of a pit in Twenty-fourth Street—and the inner sanctum of *The Churchman*.

Now, from this arduous peak of his ascent in art, he gazed backward over the path of his dramatic pilgrimage, and saw there, shining above it, a "star" of recollection, gleaming from those far, enchanted nights of his boyhood when he had first beheld it rise—at the rise of a theatre-curtain.

In the year his mother had died, when "Jimmy McKay" was but seven years old, Edwin Booth had made his début. When "Jim McKaye," had been a "Bowery 'prentice" at the old Olympic, Booth had already risen to fame. When "James Steele MacKaye," had just won his player's spurs in the "battle of *Monaldi*," he had written to his father: "Booth, very noble actor, has attained his prime." Eleven years before the opening of the Madison Square Theatre, Booth had opened, in Twenty-third Street, that aspiring theatre of his, where financial disaster had already brought his high aims and policies for that house to an end.

It was, therefore, to the brave *star* of Edwin Booth, that Steele MacKaye turned, in remembrance, to dedicate now the valid aspiration of his own arduous labours and achievement. In this desire, his motive was that of a high-minded maturing of youth toward a young-hearted maturity—the spirit of one honest fellow-worker toward another in mutual service to the Theatre.

Conveying this spirit of dedication, on the eve of his theatre's opening, he sent by private messenger a letter to Edwin Booth.

In the annals of both these artists' lives, this letter to the "very noble actor," and his sincerely genuine reply, are humanly significant to our theatre's history. Neither letter has, till now, been published. Their thoroughbred exchange of friendly sympathy opens a new phase of Steele MacKaye's career.

PART III

An Iron Will

"All is mystery—but there are two ways of confronting mystery: with fear, or with courage. Fear makes us servile, superstitious, teaching us to obey from degrading motives. Courage enables us (by the effort to solve) to become strong in mind and heart, and teaches us to obey from the love of the supreme beauty and wisdom. . . . Courage is the great conqueror of every virtue. Fear is the mean father of every vice."

STEELE MACKAYE. (p. 183.)

"MacKaye himself was a living example of an iron will. It was shown a hundred times in as many ways."

MOSES P. HANDY, Feb. 27, 1894.

CHAPTER XII

DRAMATIST-ACTOR-MANAGER

Hazel Kirke and the Madison Square Theatre

Feb., 1880—Jan., 1881

STEELE MACKAYE TO EDWIN BOOTH: BOOTH TO MACKAYE

(I)



"MADISON SQUARE THEATRE
Madison Square and 24th St., West
STEELE MACKAYE, Manager
NEW YORK, Jan. 30, 1880.

"Edwin Booth, Esq.

Dear Sir:

"In opening the theatre which has been built and placed under my direction, I very much desire to express towards you, in the small way in my power, my personal admiration for you as an artist, and my profound respect for you as a manager, who, at great sacrifices of health, strength and money, has honestly endeavoured to create in this city a permanent home for the highest forms of dramatic art.

"The theatre I am now about to open has been built in a spirit so like your own, when you built your own noble house in Twenty-third Street, that I feel emboldened to beg your acceptance of my own box for the opening night of the theatre which will take place on Wednesday, February fourth. The box will, of course, be entirely your own, and at your disposition, for your family or friends. It will hold six with comfort.

"I regret, dear Sir, that I have no more emphatic way of testifying to you the honour in which I hold you as the representative head of the profession which I endeavour to serve. I can only hope, however, that you may find it convenient and agreeable to accept my box, and believe me to be always, With sincere respect yours—*Steele MacKaye.*"

(II)

"68 MADISON AVENUE.

Jan. 30th, 1880.

"Mr. Steele MacKaye—Dear Sir:

"Profoundly sensible of the courtesy you so generously tender me, I am as deeply pained in being unable to avail myself of it, owing to a prior engagement. 'Tis a great disappointment to me, for I feel an honest anxiety regarding your undertaking, which I sincerely hope may

be successful, and to 'assist' at its inauguration was one of the pleasures of my vacation towards which I looked with interest.

"Thoroughly appreciating your earnest and honourable efforts on the behalf of the drama, I offer you my sympathy and cordial wishes for the realisation of your dearest hopes. I regret that visitors prevented me from sending this acknowledgment of your kindness when your messenger called.

"Thanking you for your kindly recollection of one who rejoices in the success of all true workers for the good in our profession, I am very truly, Yours—*Edwin Booth.*"

"A PERMANENT HOME FOR THE HIGHEST FORMS OF DRAMATIC ART"

An interchange of sympathies so unaffectedly sincere, in "an honest anxiety—for the realisation of dearest hopes—for the good in our profession," on the part of fellow artists, is worthy of record after nearly half a century.

At first glance, these letters may appear of transitory import. The offer of a box for an opening night—a regretful declining on account of a previous engagement. Here is matter of a passing moment—yes: yet "momentous" with durable meanings. For the large theme of this simple exchange of courtesies was nothing less than "to create a *permanent home* for the highest forms of dramatic art" in a community destined to become the mightiest city of the world.

That creative goal had been sought, by both these men, "at great sacrifices of health, strength and money." Each was an artist, who loved no single purpose more than the glad intensive perfecting of his art in the studious "lonely way" of individual seeking,—*except* the one purpose of dedicating that art to permanent, social uses of "the good, the beautiful and the true." For that social purpose, both had individually braved public misunderstanding and ridicule. They were, then, not only dedicated artists—but citizens equally dedicated.

In our day, the verdict of time has long since awarded Booth's fame its serene, deserving immortality. But the moment we are considering, in the winter of 1880, was an earlier day, when many years of our past were still potential future.

At that moment, these two men of the American theatre were, in the public view, reputed as professional "rivals." In the *managerial* sky, MacKaye's star was momentarily in ascendant—Booth's in eclipse. At the moment, apparently, MacKaye had auspiciously in hand a theatre, with support in capital and equipment admirably adapted for beginning to realise those "dearest

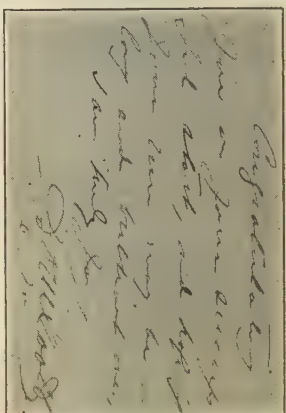


NINE VIEWS OF CHARACTERS IN "HAZEL KIRKE"

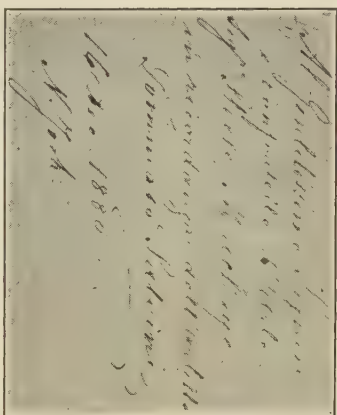
(From *Souvenir of 300th Performance*, Nov. 26, 1880): *Steele MacKaye*, as Dunstan Kirke; *Thomas Whiffen*, as Pittacus Green; *Effie Ellsler*, as Hazel Kirke; *Sydney Cowell*, as Dolly Dutton; *Mrs. Thomas Whiffen*, as Merv Kirke; *Dominick Murray*, as Aaron Rodney. (Note—In 1927, *Effie Ellsler* and *Mrs. Whiffen* still held the stage, page 365.) Cf. Plate 100.



TOMMASO SALVINI
From a photograph, 1880.



EXCERPT OF LETTER TO MACKAYE
From Edwin Booth.



INSCRIPTION TO MACKAYE FROM SALVINI



EDWIN BOOTH
From an early photograph (courtesy of Edwin Booth Grossman).

THE TWO FOREMOST ACTORS OF ITALY AND AMERICA
Their Greetings to a fellow-artist, on his founding "The Perfection of a Comedy Theatre," 1880

(pages 333, 361, 366).

hopes," which Booth as manager had been forced in disillusionment to relinquish. At that moment, then, the egging jealousies of contemporary cliques might have eroded the mutual goodwill of both these men—had they been other men and artists than they were.

To re-imagine the past as contemporaneous is a living function of biography. In this case, to do so is to brighten a vista of retrospect with the radiance of two sterling personalities—joining their goodwill in sensitive regard for a high, impersonal cause.

TRIBUTES FROM BOOTH: "THE PERFECTION OF A COMEDY THEATRE"

Booth's regretful declination of the opening (Wednesday) night box was followed almost immediately by his request for another, in this letter:

"68 MADISON AVENUE: Feb. 6th, 1880.

"My dear Mr. MacKaye: If agreeable to you, I will visit your theatre next Monday evening, and would prefer a box—should one be vacant. Congratulating you on your successful start, and hoping your run may be a long and brilliant one, I am truly yours—*Edwin Booth.*"

A few days later (Feb. 21) the *Dramatic Mirror* wrote:

"Edwin Booth visited the Madison Square Theatre, the beautiful edifice, the other night, and his verdict was: 'It is a paradise of theatres.'"

In his *Vagrant Memories*, William Winter records this note to himself, written by Edwin Booth, Feb. 22, 1880 (from Mt. Vernon, N. Y.):

"Dear Will: We went last week to MacKaye's theatre—once to see the play, and again to inspect the building. It is certainly, by all odds, the perfection of a comedy theatre: beautiful to behold in every detail.

"I hope, with all my heart, that MacKaye will be amply repaid for this great improvement in theatrical decoration and mechanism—for that (as far as it will go) is a wonderful advance. I don't see why the same method should not be applied to other than the 'shiftless' scenes of comedies. By raising and lowering the stage, a better effect in changing scenes would be given than that made in the old way. . . . *Edwin.*"

AMERICAN CULTURE: LITERATURE AND THE THEATRE'S ART

Through the careers of himself and of his father (Junius Brutus Booth), Edwin Booth brought to the American Theatre horizons

of a vast continent virile with pioneers. Steele MacKaye did likewise, through his own father and forbears recorded in this memoir. Both these men of the theatre were indigenously *American*—artists no less strongly native and pioneering in their own spirit because of their sensitive responsiveness to great artists of other eras and countries. The influence of Shakespeare upon their lives and work was marked. “I felt,” wrote Nym Crinkle, “that MacKaye could play *Hamlet*, because, in many respects, he *was Hamlet*.” Similar comments were made upon Booth. None the less was each intrinsically American.

MacKaye felt the great meanings of the Théâtre Français and responded to them creatively—not as a French, but as an American artist. So the mystic greatness of Jeanne d’Arc appealed to Mark Twain, the mediæval beauty of Florence to Howells, the vast hybrid cosmopolis of Manhattan to Whitman—with no lessening of their indigenous qualities in our native literature. These influences are discoverable in their recorded works; for the art of our literature, being the creative product of writers, has by its own nature been *self-recording* in the history of American culture. But the art of our theatre, by its very nature—creatively the product of a synthetic genius, only palely reflectable by the printed page—has never been adequately self-recording.

The recorders of it have almost never creatively combined the expert practice of the theatre’s art with practice in the art of letters equally expert. Instead, they have almost always been non-creative observers in fields far removed from the quickening origins of the theatre’s art—earnest essayists, or patient cataloguers, in halls of universities and libraries—quick-column satirists, or over-worked enthusiasts, in the magnified “brief authorities” of commercial journalism.

To the history of American culture the result of this divorce in the theatre, between creative genius and its true record, have been very impoverishing. Primarily, the result itself is due to the unimaginative public policy in America (and throughout the Anglo-Saxon world), which divorces the institution of the Theatre from the non-commercial sources of culture in our civilisation.

MALADJUSTMENT OF FORCES: THE THEATRE’S ART AND RELIGION

A realisation of this maladjustment of great social forces in our country is essential to any true understanding of the personal defeats and successes of the subject of this memoir in his pioneering

efforts to attain for the theatre an impersonal goal of social good.

Here, then, in chronicling the commencement of his first powerful directorship, I have paused to doubly stress this essential matter. For therein the very heart of what he most was seeking, could—by the nature of theatrical record itself—be least understood, interpreted and recorded by those contemporary channels of journalism, which necessarily have to play so large a part in unfolding his life to modern readers.

Comparison between the creative records of our theatre and those of our published literature has its analogy in the relative values accorded by historians to such products of genius in the theatre's art and in elemental religion. American culture has failed to fuse these values in the welding unity of an ardent social ideal. Such an unity was the fiery goal of Steele MacKaye in all his pioneering endeavours as a theatre artist.

LIBERAL CLERGY *VERSUS* PHARISEES; MACKAYE'S FIRST STEP
IN ENTENTE BETWEEN CHURCH AND THEATRE

Among the materials of this memoir are fragments of a correspondence between my father and the Rev. Dr. Henry Codman Potter, Bishop of New York, a progressive leader of the liberal clergy, quick in social sympathies and broadly open-minded to new ideas. Ten years earlier he had first met Steele MacKaye at the salon of Delsarte, in Paris.

Though my father was never a churchgoer, belonged to no sect, and was as warmly congenial in friendship with the agnostic Ingersoll as with Beecher and Archbishop Ireland, he was ardently religious in nature, and felt keenly the natural kinship of the Theatre and Church as humanistic institutions, which the historical wars of bigotry have served to separate—deeply to the detriment of both. This kinship he felt as a free artist, not as an apologist for either institution in its social defects.

In conceiving his new theatre, therefore, it was one of his earnest aims, in projecting it at New York, to bring the leaders of both institutions there into better mutual understanding, with a view to educating public opinion gradually toward the future goal of his dreams—the creation of a true “temple” of the theatre's art, dedicated not to a private Box Office but to a public reverence for Beauty.

This elemental religious urge had caused MacKaye to swallow, “hook and sinker,” the bait of pseudo-sympathy with his ideals

which the Rev. Dr. Mallory had dangled so deftly before him in his crisis of the year before. We have glimpsed, and shall glimpse again, this bucolic-cleric, piping his Beatitudes of the Box Office. So completely, indeed, did these Beatitudes compass his aim, that some stage histories of the Madison Square Theatre have ascribed wholly to Dr. Mallory the "religious" policies of that house—quite rightly with scant praise to that Pharisee, but quite wrongly in ignoring that the policies would never have been launched at all but for Steele MacKaye, who originated them in their sterling simplicity, and would never have consented to associate himself with them, had he conceived they were to be rendered tinsel and Pharisaical.

As a modest first step, MacKaye conceived and advocated simply a sincere *entente cordial* between liberal New York clergymen and the artistic régime of his playhouse, with the object of quickening a mutual goodwill in the constituencies of congregations and audiences.

Eight years earlier, without seeking it, he and his little St. James Theatre had become a focal centre of eager interest and support on the part of James Freeman Clarke, O. B. Frothingham, Samuel Longfellow, H. W. Bellows, Henry Ward Beecher, Lyman Abbott, and other liberal ministers, who made the purposes of his first theatrical experiment a theme of their sermons and essays. Half a century later, a few blocks from the site of his three New York theatres, those purposes, in part, were to be formally embodied and urged by an impressive conclave of "The Church and Drama Association of New York," in proclaiming (1926) their "General Purpose" as follows:

"Recognising the power of Drama to influence human ideals and conduct, we believe it our obligation and privilege to work for a wider support of dramatic art as a creative force, and to seek its employment for the pursuit of spiritual culture."

The historic beginnings of that consummation are very definitely to be traced to this early pioneering on the part of Steele MacKaye. In 1880, his magnetic personality and ideas drew to him and his theatre the co-operation of Bishop Potter, with whom he held a detailed conversation on the eve of the opening of *Hazel Kirke*.*

* The immediate cordial response to his ideas is evident in their exchange of letters, quoted in the Appendix.

"UNREPRESENTED" AUDIENCES; CHRISTIAN FAITH AND GREEK FATE;
"MACKAYE'S THEATRE"

Theatre audiences are perennially public bodies *non-politic*, of whom the members are probably the least "represented" in the world through public channels. Hard working salaried critics are assumed to represent them; yet a verdict of the critics themselves—and their ghosts of countless generations—would assuredly deny the assumption. "*Taxation* (at the box office) *without representation*" finds occasionally an inglorious Burke of the platform to fulminate an oration upon its impolitic unreason, without finding an "outraged people" moved by tyranny to form even a social "tea-party."

Of this obvious, seldom-acknowledged truism the destiny of *Hazel Kirke* furnished one memorable example among countless unremembered. Through the press, by some of their journalistic "representatives," the audiences of *Hazel Kirke* had been informed (*before* the first night) that the play—having been reported a "failure" on the road *—could not possibly survive in New York, and consequently deserved not to survive. A year and a half later (through duplicated productions) the play had exceeded its thousandth night. Forty years later, it was still playing "in stock."

From its inception, however, a quite different verdict of the play's deserts was being voiced by "unrepresented" members of its audience, in conversations and in private letters, discussing "the play without a villain"—then a startling innovation of a new "idealistic naturalism." Among such letters, this of Bishop Potter (from "Brevoort House, March 20, '80") expresses some meanings—of the play, and of human society—which escaped most of the "first nighters" of the press:

"Dear Mr. MacKaye: Each of the several times that I have seen your exquisite play of *Hazel Kirke*, I have felt that some one word of personal acknowledgment was due the author from me as a father, a Christian and a citizen, for having provided an evening's enjoyment at once so beautiful, pure and ennobling.

"To see an aspiration after personal worthiness in the form of a regard for a promise given, taking, in your play, the place of the Fates in the Greek drama, is most interesting: to note how blind virtues, like blind fates, may work wrong and grief, is instructive. But the

* On the road, *An Iron Will* had such meagre receipts that—lest it should fail (as *Hazel Kirke*) in New York—Charles Reade's *Masks and Faces* was put in rehearsal *before* the new theatre opened. Cf. statements of Allston Brown and Daniel Frohman, in Appendix.

Greek drama leaves us hopeless, in so much as its impelling power, the Fates, is hopelessly blind. But the drama which is, consciously or unconsciously, founded on the sweet illumination of Him who said, 'the Sabbath is made for man,' and reminded us that the value of virtue is its beneficence, is full of hope. Blind virtue may receive sight; a blind devotion to the letter of the law may give place to an illumined devotion to its spirit. It is a thought full of hope, not only for individuals, but as to the future of our race.

"I wish Delsarte, who introduced me to you, could have lived to see your beautiful play, and the many beauties of its performance as well as spirit; and all the improvements which you have effected in the whole structure and management of your delightful theatre. Believe me, Very truly yours, *Henry C. Potter.*"

"THE MOST EXQUISITE THEATRE IN THE WORLD":
HAZEL KIRKE OPENS

The many times postponed opening of the theatre was preceded by scores of articles upon its novel aims, design and equipment, stressing the "Double Stage."

"To-night," wrote the Spirit of the Times (Wed., Feb. 4th): "Mr. J. Steele MacKaye will open the most exquisite theatre in the world, and all New York will assemble to do honour to the realisation of his artistic visions. On Monday morning, before noon, every seat was sold. Mr. Augustin Daly and Miss Rose Coghlan will have boxes. The play is now called *Hazel Kirke* after the heroine.

"Mr. MacKaye will play the drama through with only two-minute waits between the acts, and will then exhibit the double stage—one compartment set for the kitchen of Blackburn Mill, the other as the boudoir at Fairy Grove Villa, so that the audience can appreciate the value of his invention. Mr. Hughson Hawley, the scenic artist, has fairly rivalled Hawes Craven, of London, and will be a celebrity after to-night. . . . All Mr. MacKaye asks from the public is to be judged by the highest standards *in a year from to-night.** . . . Not to have seen the Madison Square Theatre is to be behind the age in theatrical intelligence and artistic knowledge."

At last, on Wednesday evening, February 4, 1880, the new Madison Square Theatre was opened, with *Hazel Kirke*.† Public

* Cf. page i, 379.

† The following comprised the original cast: "*Dunstan Kirke*, C. W. COULDOCK; *Barney O'Flynn*, EDWARD COLEMAN; *Lord Travers*, EBEN PLYMPTON; *Aaron Rodney*, DOMINICK MURRAY; *Pittacus Green*, THOMAS WHIFFEN; *Hazel Kirke*, EFFIE ELLSLER; *Dolly Dutton*, GABRIELLE DU SAULD; *Clara*, ANNIE ELLSLER; *Dan*, GEORGE GRAY; *Lady Travers*, CECILE RUSH; *Mercy Kirke*, MRS. THOMAS WHIFFEN; *Met*, JOSEPH FRANKAU; *Joe*, F. BARTON; *Thomas*, HENRY JONES."

This was the first time her married name was used by Mrs. Whiffen, who till then used her maiden name, Blanche Galton. Forty-five years later, still

interest centred at first more upon the new playhouse with its innovations, than upon the play.

"THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM AT THE TOP"; "A RESPLENDENT START"

"*There is always room at the top,*" commented William Winter, in *The Tribune* (Feb. 5). "That was the opinion of Daniel Webster, and those are his words. They certainly apply to the case of the Madison Square Theatre—which, last night, was opened with much pomp, and amid pleasurable excitement, by Mr. James Steele MacKaye.

"New and splendidly handsome, his house will receive all merited attention, respect and public good-will; but the influences which proceed from its stage are its soul, and justify its existence and pretensions. These, from the guarantee of the opening performance, will be such as the best friends of the drama could desire—a theatre administered in a pure and high spirit, to the advantage of mankind in beauty, refinement of life, liberal and fine intelligence, and thus in happiness.

"Mr. MacKaye has come forward this time in a different manner from that in which, some years ago, he opened his theatre in Twenty-eighth Street, which he called the St. James. He then first dawned upon playgoers here, and it seemed as though Don Quixote himself had come again. In the years since then, Mr. MacKaye has gained practical experience, so that now,—still striving *per aspera ad astra*—he rises as an actor, without pupils, leading a company made up almost entirely of old stagers.

"Setting aside prolixity and the humorous element, *Hazel Kirke* is a creditable play. The scenes between the daughter and the blind father, when once reached, are superb, and there is great dramatic force in the scene between the heroine and her husband's dying mother. The objection is not that it ploughs an old field, but that it does the ploughing in a tedious manner. The good situations are scattered at too great intervals. . . . Mr. Couldock, as *Dunstan Kirke*, centred on himself the thoughtful admiration of the house. His embodiment of conscience and wrong-headed sense of duty, crushing down, but unable to quench paternal tenderness, touched every heart.—Miss Effie Ellsler, who acted *Hazel Kirke*, is well trained, and destined to some favour.—Mr. Plympton gave grace to the slender character of the hero.

"The Madison Square Theatre is resplendent in its start. There is understood to be a vast supply of ecclesiastical capital behind it; and so, of Mr. MacKaye's present good work, the spectator can gratefully murmur that

*'This will be accomplished by a doctor of divinity,
Who happily resides in the immediate vicinity.'*"

active in un-age-able youth of spirit, she wrote me: "My husband and I considered it a high privilege to be associated with Mr. Steele MacKaye—friend to the theatre "and the profession in general."—Cf. footnote on page i, 397.

"THE PLAY WITHOUT A VILLAIN . . . APPROACHES AT TIMES THE GREAT"

Nym Crinkle, Winter's professional rival, wrote:

"There is no villain in the play. Whatever of wrong and suffering it depicts arise out of mistaken purposes.—Its appeal is thus made directly and continuously to the generous side of nature. . . . As dramatic construction, *Hazel Kirke* moves straight forward, under impetus of a clearly defined motive. At times, it approaches the great. Its only neglected opportunities are those of climax, in the end of the first and near the end of the second acts.

"The characters are sharply individualised. In the *Dunstan* of Mr. Couldock, all the mellow power of this superb old artist is brought to bear upon this part.—About the character of *Hazel* the author has thrown every possible charm.—The play's oddest character, in which Mr. MacKaye has shown the most originality, is '*Pity*' *Green*—a whimsical, kindly fellow, who goes about declaring his own uselessness, making oddest play upon words and grotesque applications of poetry. *Green* is a comedy creation *sui generis*—a character both relevant to the play, and valuable as a foil to *Travers*."

Public praise of the new theatre and its aims was profuse and practically unqualified. Among scores of eulogistic articles, these excerpts from a New York despatch to the New Orleans Picayune (Feb. 5) epitomise the common judgment at the time:

"AN EXPERIMENT COMMANDING UNIVERSAL ATTENTION": "A PALPABLE STEP FORWARD IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN DRAMA"

"Any one in doubt that New York is rapidly becoming the theatrical centre of the world, must have been convinced of it at the opening of the new Madison Square Theatre—an event impatiently anticipated for months as an experiment commanding universal attention. At every step, in the high domain of art, it called to its aid the most intricate and delicate resources. The practical perfection of the result was attested, by every distinct feature, as a palpable step forward in the history of American drama. . . . In the house itself—unique, luxuriant—there was nothing to debilitate, everything to inspire. and the chivalry of the metropolis came to do it honour. A column could not list the names of distinguished people present.—Here is an idea of what they found, peculiarly attractive and new:

"*Seats easier of access than elsewhere*, arranged at such a pitch that every one commanded a perfect view of the stage.—*More perfect ventilation than in any public building in the world*. Six times each hour the air is entirely and imperceptibly changed—A large fan-wheel in the roof brings down the outer air in great shafts, and passes it over steam radiators in winter, over refrigerators in summer. Even the gas lights do not draw their oxygen from the air of the theatre, but are boxed in individual lanterns and breathe the outer air.

"*The basement, clean, dry and waterproof*—instead of being a

receptacle for rubbish—contains nothing but stage machinery. *The balconies, no longer in the old horseshoe form, are broken into three flowing bays, like Moorish archways laid horizontally. The lower boxes are like moresque pavilions—octagonal in form, guarded by lattices of carved wood, embossed with old ivory and gold. Their interior hangings are rich velvets and satins. In the wall decorations there are no positive tones. The keynotes of colour—gold-green, dark-red and bronze—give a sense of restfulness in the midst of fascinating adjuncts. Throughout, in material and workmanship, there is no sham.*

“The stage opening is a massive, rectangular frame, carved by hand and heavily bronzed. Above this is a graceful balcony, deeply recessed, where the musicians, twenty-five feet above their usual seats, are in full sight of the entire audience when playing; when they stop, are cut off from observation, by drawn curtains. . . . The act-drop is a veritable marvel: It is a mystic, intense expanse of palpitating needle-work: a piece of embroidered satin, representing a jungle of bulrushes and marsh flowers, rooted in a pool of water, over which hover insects of variegated hues and birds of brilliant plumage. It was designed by Louis C. Tiffany and cost \$3,000.—The bottom of the proscenium, (where the orchestra is placed in other theatres) is here adorned with living palms and ferns.

*“The double elevator-stage, invented by Steele MacKaye, is one of the wonders of the century, and perhaps marks the beginning of a new stage era. . . . The experiment of placing the musicians above the stage was received with favour. Under direction of Bernard Mollenhauer, the selections began with Beethoven’s *Consecration of the House*. . . . The play was Hazel Kirke, a production well calculated to enhance the author’s already proud position among native dramatists. . . . The scenery is wonderfully realistic. For the first time in an American theatre, doors look like doors and backgrounds do not cramp the stage picture.*

“Mr. MacKaye has gathered about him a strong and versatile company, which compares favourably with any in this country or in England.—At the close, the audience were shown by the author-director the working of his new stage. . . . Mr. MacKaye himself, a man of undoubted genius, has a fine intellectual face, a flashing eye, a nose like Julius Cæsar’s, a ready and eloquent tongue, an almost boyish enthusiasm. Having attained by perseverance and personal worth the first height of his ambition, as manager, actor and author, we may safely anticipate from him a triplicate outreach toward still greater achievement. The men who advance the money for his enterprise could not have a surer hand at the helm.”

“AN EPISCOPALIAN CONSECRATION”; “DR. MALLORY AND
EIGHTEEN PER CENT”

Apropos of this “money for his enterprise,” the unwonted connection of a “churchly interest” with the theatre was occasion for frequent skits of humour in the press. One of these (in *The*

Dramatic News) "reported" the following imaginary First-night Ritual, under the headline—"Interesting Cceremonial":

"On Wednesday evening last, the Madison Square Theatre, a new Episcopalian place of dramatic worship, was solemnly inaugurated after the manner and form in such cases by canon provided. At four of the clock the reverend clergy met in a parlour over Pfaff's (a place of 'spiritual' refreshment, just opposite). All the bishops wore their episcopal robes, the clergy—their surplices, cassocks, stoles and bands. . . . As to an appropriate vestment for Mr. MacKaye, in his sacred calling as manager, it was finally decided he should wear a purple cassock under a white *soutane*, embroidered in floss silk and gold by Mr. Louis C. Tiffany.

"This momentous question settled, at six o'clock the Madison Square Company, all attired in white, were introduced by Mr. MacKaye as candidates for baptism and confirmation.—His Lordship, the Bishop of New York, assisted by the Bishops of Pennsylvania and Illinois, administered the sacred rites, wherein—sad to record—suppressed laughter was stirred by the antics of Mr. Tom Whiffin, who gagged his lines in the baptismal rubric. Yea, this drollery so convulsed the Bishop of Pennsylvania that, in trying to gag his own laughter, he upset a quart of holy water down the back of *Dolly Dutton*." . . .

"When all had been duly confirmed, Mr. Daniel Frohman, as business manager and sexton, sang a hymn of his own composition, *We Are Christians Every One!* to the air of the Caribineers in *Les Brigands*—the whole congregation joining in the chorus. . . . The concluding strains were still echoing, when a loud cheer in Twenty-fourth Street announced that the procession to the temple was in motion—arranged in the following sacerdotal order:

Mr. Frohman, with staff.
 Two Vergers of Trinity Church.
 Choir boys and lay clerks,
 Two-and-two.
 Eli Perkins, blowing his own trumpet.
 Two churchwardens.
 Rev. Morgan Dix, S. T. D.
 Doctors of Divinity
 Two by Two.
 Father Hickey, O. S. B.
 Dodworth's Band.
 Joppa Lodge, F. & A. M.
 The Mayor of New York.
 The Dishonourable the Common Council.
 Seventh Regiment Drum Corps.
 The Bishop of New York.
 The Bishops of New Jersey, Pennsylvania,
 Illinois, California, Iowa, Wisconsin.
 "Steve" Fiske. "Willie" Winter.

The Spanish Students.	
Dr. Talmadge.	Dr. Fulton.
J. Steele MacKaye.	
Mr. Whiffen.	Mr. Couldock.
Other Members of the Company,	
Two-and-two.	
Mr. Waldron.	Mr. Hawley.
Gilmore's Band.	
Four Vergers of Trinity.	
Dr. Mallory.	
Editorial Staff of <i>The Churchman</i>	
Small Boys.	

"Two hundred and forty front seats had been reserved for this august body, and when, in full canonicals, they settled down like a flock of portly swans, a subdued cheer went up from the congregation. . . . The solemn services commenced with Beethoven's overture. Mr. MacKaye's new device secretes his orchestra at the top of the house, whence descends a resonant zinc pipe through which there musically distills an harmonious dew, lightly falling on the just and the unjust. . . . After an invocatory prayer by the Bishop of New Jersey, the whole audience sang the 121st hymn: 'This is no building reared by hand.' Thereupon Bishop Potter was about to ascend the stage, when he was discomfited by loud cries of *Mallory! Mallory!*"—Very briefly withstanding the call, Dr. Mallory was assisted to the 'star's' platform, whence he made a short, explanatory address:

"He had gone into this speculation, he said, in a spirit of pure philanthropy. Mr. MacKaye, the most eloquently persuasive young gentleman his fortune had ever encountered (loud applause), had convinced him that the imperfections of the modern theatre were due to the artistic debasement of the stage. He, therefore (Dr. Mallory) had determined to *elevate* the stage—thanks to the uplifting genius of Mr. MacKaye (laughter and applause)—by building a theatre—to provide not merely excellent ventilation, but also an excellent return upon his benevolent investment of some *eighteen* per cent. per annum. (Applause.) . . . Business and religion were too often dissociated. He (Dr. Mallory) felt they ought to go together, and if he could advance the interest of the Christian religion and *fill his pocket at the same time*, he saw no reason why he should refrain. (Applause.) . . . In conclusion, he hoped, ere the season was over, to assume the part of Cardinal Richelieu on his own sta- pulpit. (Hisses and groans.) He was aware that this bold announcement would attract hostile criticism. But he did not intend to play the Cardinal—as a Catholic. (Applause.) No!—Mr. MacKaye had agreed to convert the character to Protestantism, and he would be duly represented—as an English Archbishop. (*Loud applause.*) . . .

"When Bishop Potter had recovered his good humour, he arose, and conjured the Protestant Episcopal public, by all it held dear, to support this new enterprise. In ending—to another voluntary from the

roof—he solemnly invoked blessing upon the house, and thereupon intoned in a loud voice: ‘By virtue of my authority, as a Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, I now proclaim this place of dramatic worship—formally, legally, and canonically open!’

“Mr. MacKaye’s sermon in four acts, *Hazel Kirke*, then followed, and the exercises concluded with singing of the doxology.”

INNOVATIONS; MACKAYE’S NEW POLICIES; A “GENUINE
PROFESSIONAL MATINEE”

During his management of the Madison Square, my father was constantly devising innovations, large and small, in the conduct and equipment of the house. Among these were the first behind-the-scenes installation of fire-fighting apparatus, with organised fire-drill; the initial organising and personal drilling of duplicate road-companies; * and such minor details as the first special souvenir-programmes, presented to patrons gratis; the first passing of ice-water in the theatre (a suggestion of my mother); “professional matinées” at which the theatre management stood as host, etc. In most of these instances, the “theatre management,” that paid costs, was represented not by the Mallorys, but by Steele MacKaye as the personal “host.” †

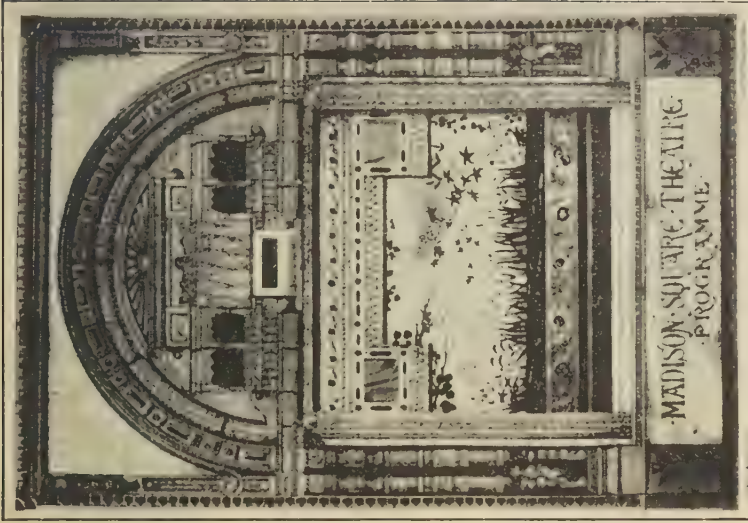
THE LAMBS CLUB, “EN BLOC”; WINTER’S EPILOGUE; DALY, WALLACK,
GILBERT, JOACHIM MILLER, MAYO, HARRIGAN & HART, TONY PASTOR

On Thursday, March 4th, occurred at the theatre a professional matinée, to which MacKaye invited the entire membership of the Lambs Club, as his guests, who were seated “en bloc” in the best seats to *Hazel Kirke*. As most of the men of his company were themselves members of the Lambs, MacKaye secured, of course, their ready co-operation in this special performance. In 1880-’81, the officers of the Lambs were: *Shepherd*, J. Lester Wallack; *Boy*, Steele MacKaye; *Recording Secretary*, John Drew.—Concerning this “family party,” at the Madison Square came this note from Daly’s Theatre:

“My dear Mr. MacKaye: I am exceedingly obliged to you for the very kind tender of your Box for Thursday’s matinée, not to speak of your accompanying expressions of feeling—which are too flattering. I will accept the Box with pleasure; and believe me, with every wish for your success and prosperity, sincerely—*Augustin Daly*.”

* Cf. pages i, 390 and i, 392.

† On February 12, 1880, for example, in a financial statement (“Steele MacKaye in a/c with the Madison Square Theatre,”) an item of twenty-four dollars, for “Extra Orchestra,” is deducted from MacKaye’s salary.

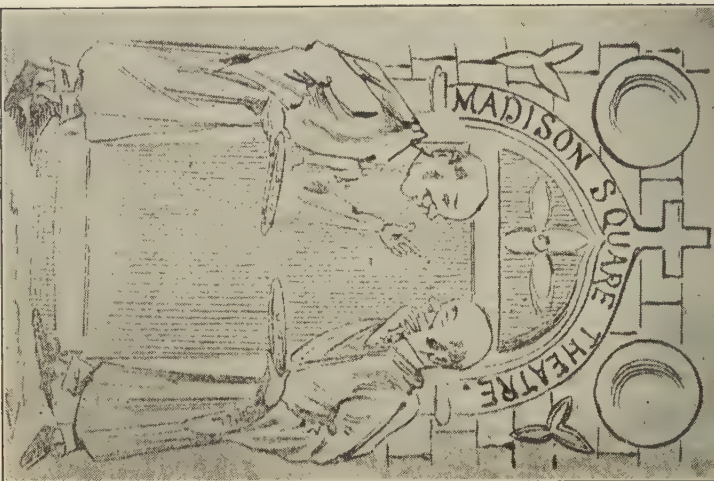


COVER OF FIRST NIGHT PROGRAMME OF "HAZEL KIRKE"
The original, in terra cotta and blues, reproduces the famous Tiffany drop-curtain (here shown), which was burned Feb. 26, 1880 (page 347).



MADISON SQUARE THEATRE
Photograph of exterior, Feb., 1888, eight years after its opening with "Hazel Kirke", Feb. 4, 1880.

A Remarkable Protestant Episcopal Episode.



TWO

CONTEMPORARY

CARTOONS

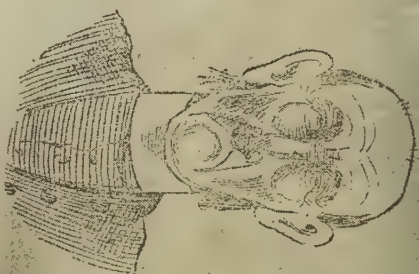
From the

NEW YORK PRESS

1880

TRUTH, MONDAY, APRIL 26, 1880.

Deities and Divinity.



The Messrs. Mallory are a couple of Episcopophanes of the straight breed who have made all the money they possess by putting in their due work on the faith or superstitions of others. Lately persuaded by that sincere and good young man, James Steele Mackay, they added to their other religious investments the erection of a theatre.

No one but a stoic packman could have got two men, one of whom is a doctor of divinity, and the other the publisher of a religious paper, to take any stock in a theatre. But they bit at the tempting bait.

For this occasion, William Winter sent some verses of his own enclosed in this note to MacKaye:

"I have written a few lines*, as I promised, to be spoken as an epilogue to *Hazel Kirke*. I fear—not bright; but—the best I could think of, on the instant; and, if spoken by Mr. Whiffen in his dry and humorous manner, they will seem better than they are. Slide them under the drop curtain, if you don't like them."

"Mr. MacKaye," reported the Herald, "kept his promise to the profession by giving yesterday a *genuine* professional matinée—purely complimentary. No seats were sold. No persons were admitted but actors, actresses, managers and playwrights,† who were not put on exhibition to the rabble, as in *so-called* professional matinées.—To their great surprise, the change between the heavy 'sets' was accomplished in forty seconds.—At close of the play, the working of the double stage was revealed, to enthusiastic applause, and Mr. MacKaye spoke on the progress of the profession."

BURNING OF TIFFANY DROP-CURTAIN; STAGE FIRE-DISCIPLINE

About a week earlier, a fire accident occurred in the theatre, destroying the famous drop-curtain (already described). It served, however, to test with perfect success, the fireproof scenery and the new fire-discipline, organised by MacKaye. In a long, published interview, my father thus described the closing scene of the catastrophe:

"A big audience gathered while we were clearing up the stage. The boys worked nobly. One of the dressers, a young woman, took a mop and went down on her knees to swab up. I handled a broom with some dexterity. I had taken off my coat and, when I addressed the audience, my face was black with soot from the burned curtains. . . . 'The audience was in capital humour and applauded everything.

* These "lines" (afterwards perhaps attached to the promptor's copy) are possibly those printed at the end of *Hazel Kirke*, as now published, commencing:

*"Will you permit me?—Thank you.—'Twas our way,
From earliest time, of winding up a play."*

† Their names—partly listed (as follows) in the Herald, record leading "professionals" of the time:

"In the brilliant audience were: Augustin Daly, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Wallack, Joachin Miller, Bartley Campbell, William Henderson, Charles Gayler, Frank Mayo, Maurice Grau, John Gilbert, John Parselle, Joseph I. C. Clarke, H. A. McGlinen, Frederick Robinson, Harry Beckett, J. W. Shannon, Gerald Eyre, Harry Edwards, T. Allston Browne, Lysander Thompson, Harrigan and Hart, C. H. Rockwell, William Davidge, The Salisbury Troubadours, the Spanish Students, J. H. Gilmore, Tony Pastor, Edward Rice, Frank Girard, Col. Prentiss Ingraham. Among the ladies: Rose Coghlan, Blanche Rosenvelt, Ada Dyas, Charlotte Thompson, Rose Wood, Stella Boniface, Mrs. J. H. Hackett and Mrs. Abby Sage Richardson.

Finally, we rigged a curtain of plain canvas (which I had bought and sewed together that day for "backing" a new scene) and when—after hammering it on a pair of battoirs—it was hoisted by ropes, they applauded as if it were the American flag. . . . The excited actors played better than ever, receiving loud recalls. After the performance, I brought the boys over to the Pimlico, and gave them a supper. I tell you, I'll never forget them!" * *

Meantime, the newspapers were continuing to poke fun at MacKaye's enthusiastic schemes and inventions—as in this further skit from *The Dramatic News*:

SKIT ON MACKAYE'S INVENTIONS: "GYRATORY STAGE, AUTOMATIC PROMPTER," ETC.

"On Monday, there was another meeting, over Pfaff's, held by the Board of Managers. Mr. Steele MacKaye read his report for the week. He said the expenses—including salaries of Joseph Jefferson, Edwin Booth, Mrs. Bowers, Lester Wallack, Madame Ristori, E. A. Sothern, Adelaide Neilson and Mrs. Florence—were \$215,000. (Sensation.) He was aware the figures *seemed* preposterous—yet, although the week's receipts were \$17,500 and the expenses \$215,000, there happily remained a balance—of \$280,000. (*Immense* applause.)

"So much for the mere pecuniary, worldly aspect. For the future—he had, in contemplation a grand scheme for the engagement of every actor and actress of the English-speaking world. (Loud applause.) With \$500 a week as a fair average salary for each of them, he would consummate a terrestrial 'corner' in dramatic talent! . . . In conclusion, he desired to report that his inventions for the week were the following:

An automatic prompter.

A gyratory stage.

A new system of electric inspiration.

A new combination of orchestra-chairs and Turkish baths.

An honest mechanical doorkeeper.

An apparatus for narcotising audiences, making them imagine that they see performances—thus saving all need (and expense) of giving any performances whatever.

"All these valuable patents he cheerfully contributed to the good cause. . . . Reverend Dr. Shackelford then rose and announced he had received a monstrous report, to the effect that Mr. Daniel Frohman, sexton of this Christian theatre, was of Jewish persuasion. To search the truth of this charge, he called for a special committee, empowered to expend a sum, not to exceed fifty cents, in subjecting Mr. Frohman's Judaism to the practical test of a ham sandwich. . . .

* A letter to the press, from MacKaye, concerning this accident appeared in the N. Y. Herald, Feb. 27, '80. A new curtain, redesigned by Louis C. Tiffany, was installed May 1, 1880, and became a lasting sensation of some years. Cf. reference to it by Oscar Wilde on page i, 449, and description of it, in Appendix (i, 348).

Motion being carried, the following were at once appointed: The Bishop of Pennsylvania, Rev. Dr. Potter, ex-Mayor Gunther.—At this point—news rising from the lower tier of the double stage, that a ballet was in rehearsal—the convocation immediately adjourned, and went below.”

“*Hazel Kirke*,” wrote Stephen Fiske, “is an astonishing success, and the audiences are not less amazing. Theatre parties of thirty and forty, all in full dress, may be seen almost every evening, and every seat is taken *. Next season, with Mr. James O’Neill added to his present force, Manager MacKaye will have an almost perfect stock company.”

James O’Neill, the gifted romantic actor, father of Eugene O’Neill,† was then playing stock at San Francisco, where he telegraphed (March 13th) to my father:

“Open to engagement. Would like Madison Square. State position definitely.”

Hazel Kirke, however, was yet to run for more than a year at the Madison Square, so O’Neill did not play there the next season, though he acted in one of the several road companies of *Hazel Kirke*, which were first launched by MacKaye.‡

MANIFOLD ACTIVITIES: LETTERS FROM CHARLES READE

Public affairs were now claiming my father’s attention. On March 15th, came a letter from Joseph I. C. Clarke, urging him to lead a symposium (for the *Herald*) on the need of governmental action in “International Playwright Protection,” in co-operation with his fellow dramatists Howard, Campbell, Fawcett, Boucicault, and Daly. His extraordinary success brought also upon him a variety of managerial duties—including scores of plays submitted for him to read, § reject, or negotiate. From London came this note from the biographer of Carlyle, Thomas Paine, etc., referring to the distinguished Irish poet, Allingham, whom MacKaye had known in England through Tom Taylor: ||

* On March 17th. St. Patrick’s Day, MacKaye arranged a benefit performance of *Hazel Kirke*, for the suffering poor of Ireland.

† Cf. pages i, 404 and i, 405.

‡ Cf. page i, 390. In a published interview (1881) Steele MacKaye himself stated: “I organised and drilled the first companies that went out on the road from the Madison Square, and invented new ways of advertising the theatre.”

§ “My dear MacKaye,” wrote William Winter (March 25, ’88): “Among the plays I would recommend to your attention are *Dreams of Delusion*, *Rural Felicity*, *The Favorite of Fortune*, *Married Life*, *The Unequal Match*, and *Henry Dunbar*. I will send you a fuller list, later.”

|| Cf. page i, 206.

"Dear Mr. MacKaye—William Allingham—true poet and a dear friend of Tennyson, Carlyle and Emerson—read me a play of his, *Ashby Manor*, so full of spirit, humour and pathos that I thought it might suit your charming theatre. . . . I have persuaded Allingham to write out a sketch of the plot for me to send you—for possible negotiation. . . . Very sincerely and faithfully, *Moncure D. Conway*." *

From London also Charles Reade wrote to MacKaye these two notes:

(March 23, '80): "I am glad you have a theatre and a prosperous one. In the way of comedies, my available pieces are (1) The new and greatly improved version † of *Masks and Faces*, as played by Bancroft 140 nights. (2) *Shilly Shally*, a Bourgeois comedy, founded by me on Trollope's novel, *Ralph and the Heir*. (3) *The Robust Invalid*, a condensed and purified adaptation of Molière's masterpiece.—You can play any one of these pieces for two pounds sterling per night, all over the Union.

(Apr. 16, '80): "*Masks and Faces*, Act I, was mailed some days ago, and to-day Act II goes out. I have detained them only to add some practical hints for your special use.—They are founded on experience and, if attended to, the performance will profit. They will also enable you to say publicly, if you like, that you have some special hints from C. R., who is your personal friend.—Keep the dupes in Act I as plain as possible, that the characters may burst out in all the splendour of contrast in Act II.—Success!"

This new version of *Masks and Faces*, however, was so slow in arriving, piecemeal, from the author, that the long-protracted rehearsals came to a close, while the run of *Hazel Kirke* became unbounded.

NEW INVENTIONS: "COMBINATION STAGE," IMPROVED LIGHTING, ETC.

Meantime, MacKaye was also very busy with new inventions. To his father, in Paris, he wrote:

"For the first time in months, I have a few moments when I am not completely exhausted.—I mail you a little silk banner, which I got up to commemorate the Fiftieth Performance of my play. . . . If

* In Feb., 1927, through my friend, Oliver Herford, I have had the pleasure of informing Mrs. Allingham, in England, that the manuscript of her husband's play, charmingly illustrated by herself, has turned up safely among my father's papers. Cf. Appendix for "A Glance Back, 1880."

† In response, this "improved version" of *Masks and Faces* was sent for by MacKaye, to be substituted for the version already in rehearsal at the Madison Square. It was not, however, actually produced till five years later, when MacKaye provided Helen Dauvray with the manuscript, to act at the Lyceum Theatre. Cf. page ii, 54.

you were here now, you might help me push through certain patents, in this country and Europe.

"I have invented a *chair* for theatres, etc.—which, by the simplest contrivance—disappears at the end of the performance, and makes the theatre, one vast aisle. . . . I have also invented a *combination stage*, which makes the most miraculous effects very easy of production; and a *ventilating apparatus*, which makes the air of a house, or theatre, not only purer than the air in the street, but tonic and recuperative.—Also I have invented an *improved lighting apparatus*. . . . I will leave Mary to tell you home news, and more about my success thus far than would sound well from your son."

A TRIBUTE; EASTER CONCERT; CAMPANINI DESCENDS INTO HADES

Apropos of this reference to my mother, I have found this clipping—marked for her in my father's handwriting: "A fitting tribute to the loveliest of wives.—J. S. M.":

"In the manager's box, at the Madison Square, there was a delicate lily of a woman—surrounded by five magnificent boys, whose exuberant vitality was curbed by her refined presence as the lightning is guided by a fine-drawn wire.—The pride and enthusiasm to be read on those faces, at the work of the husband and father, was enough to fire an audience with responsive glow."

Despite her then fragile health, my mother was frequently hostess in our home at receptions to distinguished artists and visitors. On one of these occasions, Signor Campanini, the famous tenor, of "Her Majesty's Opera Company," took part there, and also sang in an Easter concert, given at a special matinée of *Hazel Kirke*.

"At Mr. MacKaye's Easter Concert," said a report, "Signor Campanini, in fine spirits, insisted on singing the quartet from *Rigoletto* four times in response to his enthusiastic hearers. At the close—to show the working of the new stage—after great trepidations of Mlle. Belocca, and heroic efforts of Signor Campanini to rally her nerves, the singers resumed their positions, and gradually subsided to the lower regions—the last glimpse being a sunny smile, and cordial wave to the audience, from the victorious Campanini!"

During May and June, MacKaye was busily engaged in a series of social functions and theatre benefits, in at least one of which he took part. Among letters to him which have accidentally survived, are some which suggest the varied calls of these activities.

GREETINGS: J. G. BLAINE, PRESIDENT HAYES, LAWRENCE BARRETT, LORD CAMPBELL, WALLACK, BECKETT, WINSLOW HOMER, WM. M. CHASE, DUKE OF BEAUFORT, ETC.

James G. Blaine requests "a lower box to *Hazel Kirke* for myself and some critical lady friends from Boston!" . . . President Rutherford B. Hayes sends his compliments concerning the new theatre, and for attentions "so courteously tendered." . . . Lawrence Barrett asks MacKaye's "influence in favour of a young lady of Pittsburgh, who goes upon the stage from love and fitness.—She has promising qualities, and your teaching and example would be invaluable to her." . . . "Hail to your most wonderful triumph!" writes E. M. Holland, from England. . . . "Your success," writes Stephen Fiske, "is beyond congratulations, but—Excelsior!" . . . From Lord Campbell * comes a note of invitation to MacKaye to "a small party at the Brevoort House," requesting MacKaye's "kind offices for a stage aspirant." . . . "I shall do myself the pleasure of calling on you," writes Robert Underwood Johnson from *Scribner's*, "and I extend my very respectful thanks for your obliging favour."

For the English actor, Henry Beckett, MacKaye organised a benefit performance, for which he got several artist friends to head a formal invitation (May 3rd)—"as an expression of the good-will of your American friends . . . indebted for the many delightful hours you have afforded them during the past eleven years of your labours here.—(Signed) F. Hopkinson Smith, R. Swain Gifford, J. Alden Weir, Wm. M. Chase, Arthur Quartly, Winslow Homer, Steele MacKaye."

Concerning this, Beckett wrote (May 17th) from the Lambs: "Dear MacKaye, I sent your letter to Wallack; he had not yet arrived, but we may expect a reply to-night. I shall be at the club about ten."

To which this "reply," from Lester Wallack, in his theatre dressing-room:—"My dear MacKaye: I seize a moment, in the midst of this never-ending part, to say that to serve my friend Beckett is a pleasure to me, but it has been a fixed rule with me never to have a benefit for *any* of my company *during the season*. . . . Poor Montague, even, of whom I was so fond, I could not give *my* theatre to, because he took his benefit in the regular season. If Beckett will take this theatre after the 29th, or *another* theatre previous to that date, I will do all I can to aid the good cause. . . . In haste (curtain waits). Yours ever—L. W."

This benefit,† in which Beckett himself took part, was given at

* "Archibald Campbell, brother of the Marquis of Lorne, accounted himself one of the Clan MacKay, and so sought out your father—while on a visit to New York, in 1880,"—my mother has written me.

† Meantime my father was also assisting another actor's benefit—the "*Bon Voyage National Testimonial*" to John T. Raymond, which took place at Booth's Theatre, June 3rd, 1880. Among its notable participants were E. A. Sothern, *E. Dee Sothern* (the earliest stage-name of E. H. Sothern), John McCullough, Mr. and Mrs. Sol Smith, L. J. Vincent, "Nat Goodwin, Jr.," W. J. Florence, John T. Raymond, and Rose Coghlan ("By kind permission of Mr. Steele MacKaye") as *Lady Teazle*, to *Sir Peter* of John Gilbert. Cf. *Appendix*.

Wallack's Theatre, June 1, 1880. Soon after, Beckett himself sailed for England, whence he wrote to my father (June 27th):

"Many thanks for your past kindness to me. I see by the papers *you are playing yourself*. Where are you going to stop?—Architect, Author, Manager, Actor, and successful in all: more than your share, though not more than you deserve!"

On May 26th, William Winter wrote:—"My dear MacKaye: "You would have had my more active aid in the Beckett Benefit, but I have had to spare my strength to fulfil my literary duty at Washington.—I have embarked in a movement to give Edwin Booth a Farewell Breakfast (at Delmonico's, June 15th).—You will unite with us in this, I'm sure."—The Duke of Beaufort wrote to MacKaye (June 7th): "Before leaving New York, I must thank you for the very pleasant evening you afforded me and my friends. I never saw so perfect a gem of a theatre! The play was a great treat, thoroughly enjoyed by us all.—Yours faithfully—*Beaufort*."

MACKAYE ACTS *MELNOTTE* WITH "QUIET INTENSITY"; MCCULLOUGH; DEATH OF JOHN BROUGHAM; JOHN RAYMOND BENEFIT

In the Beckett benefit at Wallack's, MacKaye acted the part of *Claude Melnotte* in Act III of *The Lady of Lyons*, with Mme. Ponisi as *The Widow Melnotte* and Rose Coghlan as *Pauline*. Shortly before, William Winter, who had been taken suddenly ill, had been nursed by my father and mother at their home. Soon after, Winter wrote (June 4th) to my father:

"I shall never forget your goodness to me, when I was sick, the other day. . . . I saw you in the *Claude* act the other night, and liked particularly the quiet intensity of it. . . . The Booth festival goes on all right, June 15.—The sad news about Mr. Brougham has clouded everything for me."

John Brougham, the renowned Irish actor and playwright, was then lying very ill in New York. Three days later, he died. On that day came this note:

"Dear MacKaye,—7 P.M., Friday, the hour and day!—Delmonico's, 26th St., the place!—Adios!—*John McCullough*. Sturtevant House."

On May 23rd, Raymond, the actor, had written to my father:

"Dear Mr. MacKaye: Will you play *Joseph Surface* in Scene Second of *School for Scandal* for my benefit, with Miss Coghlan and John Gilbert?—Your friend, *John Raymond*."

At this Raymond benefit, which took place in Booth's Theatre, June 3rd, 1880, Rose Coghlan acted "by permission of Steele MacKaye," with John Gilbert. (See footnote on page 352.)

EDWIN BOOTH FAREWELL BREAKFAST; MACKAYE SPEAKS ON
"ART AND SOCIETY"

On June 12th, came the following word from Algernon S. Sullivan:

"The Committee having in charge arrangements for the 'farewell breakfast' to Edwin Booth request you to speak to the sentiment, '*The Art Element in Society.*' I enclose this invitation."

"A FAREWELL BREAKFAST TO EDWIN BOOTH

To Mr. Jas. Steele MacKaye

"The friends of MR. EDWIN BOOTH intend to commemorate his departure from home, for a long residence abroad, and, probably for a professional appearance on the English stage, by a tribute which will express, in high honour and affectionate admiration, the cordial good wishes which will follow him in the Old World.—This tribute will take the form of a Breakfast, at Delmonico's, 5th Avenue and 26th Street, on Tuesday, June 15th, 1880, at 12 o'clock.—Your presence at this festival is cordially desired."

At that gathering to the honour of Edwin Booth, who sailed soon afterwards (June 30th), my father spoke, by the above request, on the congenial theme of art and human society.

MACKAYE'S "LAURELS" AS RODNEY; WINTER'S POEM ON POE; OLE BULL

Before Booth sailed, however, he was to appear once more, in farewell to America—this time as an actor, on the stage of my father's Theatre, at a Poe Statue Fund Benefit, which my father assisted Booth in organising. To this William Winter thus refers in a note to MacKaye (June 19 *):

"I hope you enjoyed the Booth banquet. I send herewith a Ms. copy of my Poe Poem, which I promised to send to you, for the programme, on the 24th. Let me see a proof.†—Ever yours."

Concerning the Poe Statue Benefit, came this word (through Booth's secretary) from Edwin Booth, with whom MacKaye was co-operating in the project:

* On June 19, MacKaye acted, for the first time, the part of *Aaron Rodney* in *Hazel Kirke*, to allow Dominick Murray to take a vacation. A review of it observed:—"Steele MacKaye has added another leaf to his laurels—enough now to make a summer hat!—by appearing as *Squire Rodney*. . . . An actor, in his own play, at his own theatre, cooled by his own invention . . . such a genius as Mr. MacKaye is wasting 21 hours a week, impersonating *somebody else* on the stage. In those hours—what plays he might write!— It is as if Dickens should be setting type for his own Mss., when he ought to be handling the pen."

† Cf. W. W.'s poem, in Appendix.

"Dear Mr. MacKaye—Mr. Booth will send to-morrow books for the company, at 10, as arranged.—Mr. Booth says he has received Miss Ellsler's offer to play *Katherine* and he will write accepting.—He suggests Mr. and Mrs. Whiffen for *Grumio* and *Curtis* * and desires your advice on the following point:—Would it not be well—since great pressure has been brought to bear upon Clara Morris to do 'sleep-walking scene'—to place it just before the Booth piece, so that no furniture would have to be moved during the performance?"

Under caption of "THE POE FUND," an article announced:

"On Mr. MacKaye's stage, Mr. Edwin Booth will make his farewell appearance in this city, before going abroad; and Mr. Ole Bull will bring forth his famous violin.—Mr. MacKaye himself is lending a generous helping hand to this admirable benefit—a benefit in the highest sense—and the foremost members of his fine company will appear with Mr. Booth and Miss Morris."

MACKAYE RECITES "THE RAVEN"; PRAISE FROM BOOTH; "STRIKING RESEMBLANCE TO POE"; "FAMOUS DOUBLES"

The Poe Fund Benefit performance, for a statue of the poet in Central Park,† took place, at the Madison Square Theatre, on the afternoon of Monday, June 28th, 1880. Edwin Booth acted *Petruchio* to the *Katherine* of Effie Ellsler in a brief scene from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Clara Morris acted *Lady Macbeth*, in the sleep-walking scene. Steele MacKaye opened the occasion by reciting *The Raven* by Poe.

In order to hear this recitation before his own appearance as *Petruchio*, Edwin Booth sat in one of the theatre boxes, with his daughter, Edwina, then a girl of eighteen. Forty-four years later, Mrs. Edwina Booth Grosmann wrote to the writer of this memoir:

"When the recitation of Poe's great poem by your eminent father, Steele MacKaye, was given at his Madison Square Theatre, I sat in a stage box with my father, and I have never forgotten the impression made upon me by your father's voice and appearance. . . . During his superb rendering of *The Raven*, Edwin Booth remarked: 'How strongly Steele MacKaye resembles Edgar Poe! He is undoubtedly the greatest dramatic reader of his generation. His genius, as such, is unspoiled by theatricalisms.'"

This resemblance of MacKaye to Poe, thus noted by Booth, was frequently a source of comment. Especially in his early manhood

* "Dear Mr. MacKaye," wrote Daniel Frohman, the next morning, "Can I write Winter a note about the Poe programme matter? Let me know your decision regarding enclosed list of names. Yours, Dan."

† The statue was presented to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, on May 4, 1885. Concerning the ceremonies then, cf. Appendix.

(he himself told me) persons who had known Poe well would mention it to my father personally. In the Players Club library is a bust of Poe by Edmond T. Quinn, the American sculptor, who made for me a replica of it, which I have kept for years in my study, on account of its appealing likeness to my father. Among his papers, I have found this note (April 22nd, 1890), from the editor of *The Illustrated American* (William T. Walsh):

“Dear Mr. MacKaye—I am getting up an article on *Famous Doubles**, and I am very anxious to get your portrait to use in juxtaposition with Edgar Allan Poe, to whom I think you bear a striking resemblance.—Could I obtain your photo? Or, if not, could I send an artist to sketch you?”

HOME ILLNESSES AND DEVOTIONS; GEORGIA CAYVAN DÉBUT

Organising three benefits within a month, acting in one of them, speaking in public, teaching his pupils, acting in his own play, commencing to write a new one: these were some of my father's summer-weather activities in the world of his profession. Meantime, in his home, he carried the cares of a large family and a small salary with buoyant pluck. An epidemic of measles in his household of six boys at about this time, was no joke. I remember lying in a dark room, at the top of our house—my mother, seated on the edge of my bed, reading aloud to me a book of fairy tales, by a slit of light through a window blind; while up the long stairway rose a steadily-mounting, rhythmic sound of anticipated footsteps—my father's (of a firm, resilient cadence like nobody else's), and soon his lithe figure was bending over me, with a glow of loving vitality. By these home illnesses my mother was greatly exhausted. Concerning this general period she has written me:

“The winter and early spring of 1880 were a bright spot in our shine and shadow. We had at least half money enough to run the house, and we had great interest in the theatre. Its success was as instantaneous as those first lectures in Boston—crowded houses, standing room only, month after month. . . . *Georgie Cayvan was brought out by your father* and given the part of *Hazel* for the summer season—her first appearance on the stage. She had been a pupil of prof. Monroe in Boston, and was a public reader. She stayed as our guest in our home. . . . The list of actors and actresses who played in *Hazel Kirke* is a very long one. After performances, your father would be asked by people (often very noted people) to show them the

* Cf. the photographs of Poe and MacKaye—illustrations in this chapter.

double stage—going up and down in it, with their theatre parties—for the stage was *the* theatrical sensation of that year.

"During this time, many social duties devolved upon both of us. My health was wretched; by summer I was worn out, but struggled on.

A "HAPPIEST MOMENT": HAZEL KIRKE—WON AT LAST!

"On August 24th Hazel was born, at our house, 107 W. 44th St. It was about the 250th performance of *Hazel Kirke*, so she was named Hazel for the play. Her brother, Harold, announced the new arrival (to 'Aunt Sadie,' in New England) by this aphoristic telegram: '*Hazel Kirke—Won At Last!*' At last, indeed, after so many boys—my baby daughter beside me!—that was the happiest moment in my life."

This "happiest moment" was equally shared by my father, who was described as "walking on air," and declaring the new arrival his "mascot of high fortune" to all his friends. Meantime his summer days passed busily. Some volunteer tasks in aftermath of the Poe Statue Benefit are hinted in this note from William Winter, about a fortnight after Booth's sailing for England:

"My dear MacKaye: I have been kept away from you by engrossing labours—eight books under way at once! . . . Edwin Booth has requested me to confer with you as to the Poe Statue affair.—I am going out to Hoboken, Tuesday, to farm a few days, with Jefferson. On my return, I will call on you, at once.

JOE JEFFERSON "ACTS" WITH BOOTH'S GRANDSON IN A PLAY BY
STEELE MACKAYE'S SON

At this "farm" of Joseph Jefferson, MacKaye was the guest of his friend, the actor-painter, for occasional "easel-talks" such as those referred to in Chapter X. Such conversations and friendships with fellow artists of the theatre, like Jefferson and Booth, were so vital a part of my father's life, that it has seemed pertinent, at this point, to record a heritage of those friendly influences, extended to a second and third generation.

A very early play of my own (*Kinfolk of Robin Hood*) was written for the boys of a New York private school, amongst whom was the grandson of Booth—Edwin Booth Grossman (since distinguished as a painter), who acted the chief rôle in the play. Resultantly, some while after, E. H. Sothern assigned the lad a small part in my comedy, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (in which Sothern was then preparing to act the rôle of *Chaucer* in a production of his own). Young "Ted" Grossman was thus studying his small part, on vacation in Miami, Florida, where his study of it was un-

wittingly the means of enabling me, as dramatist, to boast that the great Joe Jefferson did (for one magnifying moment) enact a part in a play of mine. How he did so, is told in this sympathetic recollection of the old comedian, written by Edwin Booth Grossman himself, in 1926:

"Joe Jefferson, rehearsing me in my small part of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* is etched still clear on my memory. . . . He had asked me to read him the part, and while I nervously did so—turning to him shyly, for approval—he said: 'Never look at your audience! No matter how small your part, be convinced it is the best in the play, and *act* it with all your soul. Always have great confidence in yourself, never think of the audience, and *be* the character you are acting.'

"But better than his words was the moment when, glancing from the lines (where the scared pot-house boy thinks he sees a spook in the cellar), he *became* that pot-house boy before my eyes—went down into the cellar right there in the parlour, turned back at me a face covered with the mingled fright and stupid look of a yokel, and spoke the lines, 'he'll drub me with his thigh-bones,' with that voice which needed no acting to prove that on the stage the voice is practically everything. . . . What a wonderful soul he was! And the tenderness of his heart was 'broadcast' whenever he used that beautiful voice. . . . The last time I ever saw him, he had stepped out on the verandah of his Palm Beach cottage—a balmy breeze from the ocean blowing back his hair and flapping his old smoking-jacket against his spare, old-man's figure. There, gazing up into the tropical night sky, brilliant with stars that were mirrored below in the water, he said, half to himself: 'Well, my boy, I firmly believe we'll all meet again some day,—on one of those stars.' "

To this recollection of Joe Jefferson I may add this brief one of my own. Speaking of his methods in acting, he once said to me:

"In every part I play, and no matter how often, always, before I speak my lines, I *think* them afresh. Even in *Rip*, which I've played countless times, the *thought* of each speech still comes to me, with a kind of surprise. In this way, the mind of the audience is prepared beforehand, like fresh soil, to 'plant' the playwright's words in."

Would that every playwright might cast his plays with a multiple Joe Jefferson! Lacking that Utopia, the next best would be such personal directorship of actors by masters of their art as my father's words have suggested in the preceding chapter.*

* Cf. page i, 312.

A PLAY WITH JOSEPH HATTON; LAURA SEYMOUR LETTERS

During the summer, MacKaye had been busily drilling extra companies of *Hazel Kirke*, two of which had been sent out on the road in late August. These he himself would briefly accompany to neighbouring cities, such as Jersey City * and Newark, to launch their production with that detail in acting, lighting, etc., which was always his keen assiduity.

Meantime, from London, had come to him the English novelist and playwright, Joseph Hatton, editor of the London *Hornet*. A friend of Charles Reade, Hatton had recently collaborated a play with the son of Charles Dickens, and now brought with him a novel of his own, *The Queen of Bohemia*, asking MacKaye to dramatise it, for possible production at the Madison Square Theatre.

"I have begun work on the play," wrote my father, June 30th. Renamed by him *A Woman of the World*, he had completed the dramatisation by October, on the 21st of which, at my father's invitation, Hatton gave a matinée author's-reading of his novel at the Madison Square. On the 24th, he wrote to MacKaye:

"Thank you for all your kindness. The matinée will always have my pleasantest remembrances. . . . Now about *the play*: I would like to sell you *The Queen* (your *A Woman of the World*, is a far better title) outright. I shall feel perfect confidence in leaving the whole work to your experience, good taste and judgment. The piece does singularly fit your house, and the high tradition you have set up for it. . . . As to terms, Dickens and I for *Edwin Drood* (accepted at the Princess's) had £100 on delivery of the Ms. with £30 a week royalty. . . . You shall have all American rights of *A Woman of the World* (Queen of B.) for moderate terms—£100 now: you to undertake to produce piece to follow *Hazel Kirke*, or to open *your new theatre* within a certain date.

"I have been enabled to get you to-day the *Charles Reade correspondence*. Voila!—Will you send me the *Laura Seymour* † portrait, my stick, and some of your own and your wife's photo-portraits, as my wife and I go aboard the *Arizona*, Monday. Soon the sea will roll between us again.—Our united kindest regards to you and yours!"

"NEW THEATRE" PLANS; HENRY IRVING DESIRES MACKAYE TO BUILD HIM A LONDON THEATRE

In this letter, the words "to open your new theatre" are significant. MacKaye's intolerable conditions of contract at the

* On "Mon., Sept. 25, '80," Stephen Fiske wrote to him: "I cannot get over to Jersey City now; but will come Wednesday and cover your play in the *Jersey City Argus*, *The Mirror*, &c."

† The friend of Charles Reade. Cf. page i, 219.

Madison Square were such as to fill his mind with dreams of freedom to create another theatre unfettered by his own. Plans for this were already related to new stage inventions devised by him for a new design in theatre-building, intended to be financially self-sustaining—a project touched upon in the next chapter.

After his return to England (in the following spring), Joseph Hatton wrote to my father, enthusiastically:

“Henry Irving has asked me to express his desire that you shall build for him a theatre here in London—another ‘model MacKaye theatre’ to eclipse your Madison Square!—When will you come over?”

But this auspicious message reached my father in the midst of darkly inauspicious events, which were even then growing imminent in the autumn of 1880.

KYRLE BELLEW; SARAH BERNHARDT; TOMMASO SALVINI

Meantime arose other transatlantic relationships. In October of 1880, the same ocean ship which took Joseph Hatton back to England had just landed from London in New York an actor of fine personal charm and classic beauty of feature, destined to take high place professionally in America. On arrival he wrote to my father (from “Westminster Hotel”), as the newly disembarked H. J. Montague had written six years earlier, in similar mood of seeking new fortunes:

*“Dear Mr. MacKaye—I arrived per Arizona yesterday, and am unsettled as to my movements yet awhile. I should feel much honoured if you could grant me a few moments.—I dare say, though I am personally unknown to you, my name may be familiar through our late lamented friend, Tom Taylor. . . . I shall call down to-night about 8, hoping to see you and your pretty house.—Yours, Kyrle Bellew.” **

In response, Bellew was welcomed by my father, introduced by him to the *Lambs*, and soon launched on his American career, during which he acted in several of my father’s productions. Two other New York Harbor arrivals, at this time, were occasions for showing honour to eminent theatre artists from abroad. On Oct. 25th, 1880, came this invitation to MacKaye, from Abbey’s Park Theatre:

* Excerpt from an article by Kyrle Bellew, in the London “Theatre” magazine, describing the Madison Square, is included in the Appendix.

"Mr. H. E. Abbey requests the pleasure of your company on an excursion-trip to meet *Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt*, who is expected to arrive by the *Amerique*, on Wednesday next. . . . The steamboat *Blackbird* will leave Pier 18, North River, at 5 A.M. precisely, on Wed., October 27th."

In Paris, through his old master, Régnier, of the Théâtre Français, MacKaye had been well-acquainted with the distinguished French actress, with whom now in America that bond of professional friendship was a pleasant theme of reminiscence.

Three weeks later, followed this invitation, signed by his old friend, the Dante scholar, who, with his wife (Anne Lynch Botta), held for thirty years a salon of artists in New York:

"The pleasure of the company of STEELE MACKAYE, Esq. is requested at the Everett House, on Wednesday evening, November 17th, at half past ten o'clock, to meet the eminent tragedian, SIGNOR TOMMASO SALVINI, on the occasion of his revisiting America.—Chairman of Reception: *Vincenzo Botta*."

This first meeting of MacKaye with the great Italian tragedian was followed, shortly, by several friendly exchanges between them, in the French language, during one of which Salvini gave him the photograph of himself, here reproduced,* with this cordial inscription of "confraternity in art" :

"*All Gentilissimo Signore e confratello d'Arte,—Sigre. Steele MacKaye, in ricordanza dell'artista, Tommaso Salvini. 16 dec. 1880. N. York.*"

In connection with both these foreign theatre artists, my father's linguistic repute as an actor in French is attested by this item in the N. Y. World (Dec. 8, '80) :

"*Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt personated Desdemona recently at the Théâtre Français. If she would repeat the experiment here, Mr. Abbey might undoubtedly cram his theatre at \$10 a ticket, by getting Salvini to murder her, on the instigation of Mr. Steele MacKaye, as Iago.*"

Salvini's first visit to these shores had been in 1873. In 1880, '82, '86 and '89, he revisited America. In 1886, when he acted his greatest part of *Othello*, in Italian, supported by Edwin Booth, as *Iago*, with a company of English-speaking actors, I was taken, as a child, by my father to see that unforgettable performance, which

* Cf. illustration in this chapter.

impressed me even then by the might of its passion and the magic of Salvini's sonorous voice.

Later (in 1899), together with my wife, I was to see and hear his *Othello* again, acted in Rome to the *Iago* of his son, Gustavo,* a joint appearance of genius incomparably noble, for Gustavo was then deemed by his father an artist superior to himself.—Soon afterward, in Florence, I visited in his home the old, retired titan, Tommaso, who emerged from his retirement to act again, only on rare occasions, for the sake of his son. There, charmingly, he recalled his friendship for my father, and discussed with me phases of the theatre, in poetry and acting.

"Of the poet, the actor, and the director," I asked him, "whose influence should dominate in an ideal representation?"

His answer sang like an arrow, shot from a cello-string:

"Tutti e tre devono concorrere al buon esito del componimento, e a beneficio dell'arte." † (*"All three should unite for the consummation of the whole, and for the benefit of art."*)

With the rippling "rr's" of "*Concorrere*" (literally "to run together"), Salvini—with an eager gesture, significant of joining hands—looked at me with one of those splendid glances of the heart which played, like lightnings, about his Italian features.

MANY *OTHELLOS*: MCCULLOUGH: F. F. MACKAY AND HAZEL KIRKE
ROAD TOUR

In December, 1880, while Salvini was acting *Othello* in Philadelphia, Lawrence Barrett was acting it in Brooklyn, and John McCullough in New York. From the third of these competitive *Othellos* came, on an "off" Sunday night, this note by messenger to our home in Forty-fourth Street:

"My dear MacKaye—For God's sake, forgive me! I wanted to get to you all this evening, but the 'fates' forbid. Do make it all right for me with your good wife. I don't care how mad *you* get at me, but don't want to offend *her*!—Yours always, John McCullough."

Meantime, MacKaye was still active in preparing new "road" companies of *Hazel Kirke*, which was being "pirated" in many parts of the country—notably in a very successful run at the Baldwin

* On returning to America in 1900, I tried (unsuccessfully) to enlist the interest of New York managers to bring to our country Gustavo Salvini.

† Later, that day, Salvini (who "had" almost no English) wrote down this, with other memoranda of our Italian talk, which I have preserved.

Theatre, San Francisco.—Concerning such piracies F. F. MacKay wrote to him (on Nov. 20th):

"I have a list of the small towns where an extra company might produce *Hazel Kirke* to advantage.—I think you may be persuaded there will be an advantage to you, as well as to myself and Miss Sylvester, in presenting your play to such towns with your sanction and assistance, instead of leaving the field to others, who will obtain your play in a surreptitious way, and make money by it, *without profit or authorial reputation for yourself.*" *

F. F. Mackay (who pronounced his name *Máck-y*), was of "clan-kinship" with Steele MacKaye through the old Scotch highland bond of "*Manu Forti.*" He acted in *Hazel Kirke*, *A Fool's Errand* and *Won at Last*, in the last two with my father.† Some years later, on retiring from a long, distinguished career as actor, he continued to teach the arts of elocution and of acting in a school of his own, and became the Nestor of the Players Club till his death. One evening, in 1924, I met him, dodging automobiles, behind an "El" truss, midstream of 44th Street and Sixth Avenue. I stopped, to help him across; but he flashed up through shaggy brows a glance of genial sharpness, and clipped out, with Scotch precision:

"No help at all needed, I thank ye! And pardon my hastiness. I have been at work in my school since five o'clock this morning; but now I must be hurrying off to a bit of a home party, for it's my ninety-first birthday."

So he shot away in the twilight, his short, doughty figure lost in the surging crowd—as agile as *Alan Breck* in the dim heather of Stevenson's *Kidnapped*.‡

MACKAYE AS DUNSTAN KIRKE; PLANS FOR "DOUBLING" FOUR ROLES

In September, 1880, at Jersey City and Newark, MacKaye had already acted with a *Hazel Kirke* extra company which he had

* These italics indicate what the Madison Square Management continued to do for years.

† See their accompanying joint photograph in *Won at Last*.

‡ In 1920, F. F. MacKay wrote:

"Steele MacKaye, poet, philosopher, dramatist, was a brilliant and instructive conversationalist. In the dramatic art, he gave a great impetus to playwriting. By the introduction of the Delsartian system of study, *which was his own invention*, MacKaye gave a new thought to the study of elocution in its application to dramatic art, and the present Academy of Dramatic Arts was the outcome of his enthusiastic and earnest efforts toward artistic development. Though money had no value with MacKaye, except to assist the presentation of his ideas, dramatists, actors and elocutionists have good reason to be glad that he lived." Cf. footnote on page i, 152.

drilled, assuming himself the part of *Dunstan Kirke*.^{*} In that part he made his first New York appearance, on November 23rd, at the Madison Square Theatre, where Salvini, as his guest, witnessed MacKaye's performance of *Dunstan*, and, after the play, was keenly interested in the working of the Double Stage which its inventor explained to him. This was followed by a supper to Salvini, given by my father, who was host to numerous guests, one of whom—a prominent journalist—despatched this note, by hand, from the N. Y. Herald office, at midnight (Nov. 23):

“Dear Mr. MacKaye: I saw *Dunstan Kirke* to-night, but a call from the office robbed me of the expected pleasure of accepting your invitation to meet Salvini. . . . About your impersonation of the old Miller, I can't refrain from expressing my delight at the manner in which you pitted tongue and heart against each other in the third act.—Long life to the part and the actor!—Yours admiringly, *John Hubberton*.”

Only brief comments on MacKaye's enactment of this rôle appeared in the press—a state of criticism which stirred *The Spirit of the Times* to this meditation on the obsequiousness of New York journalism to European glammers, at the expense of native achievements:

“In any other capital, such an important artistic incident as the assumption by Steele MacKaye of the part of *Dunstan Kirke* in his own play, at his own theatre, would enlist columns of criticism. Here it is noted only with a word, while the dribblings of overseas critics—cabled over at enormous expense—appear conspicuously as ‘news.’

“Such treatment would discourage any nature less robust than Steele MacKaye's. But he thrives upon it, and—in intervals of acting—calmly superintends the photographing of his company, for the souvenir of the 300th performance of *Hazel Kirke* (Nov. 26); the 350th (Jan. 17, 1881); the 365th (Feb. 4, 1881); and the 1,000th, which will occur on Oct. 28, 1882, when Mr. MacKaye will appear as *Rodney* in the first Act, *Pittacus* in the second, *Lord Travers* in the third, and *Dunstan* in the fourth—an unparalleled achievement.”

Here was a characteristic dream of quadruple “doubling,” which might well have been fulfilled; for, on separate occasions, MacKaye had then already acted in his play, the parts of *Travers*, *Rodney*, *Pittacus*, *Barney O'Flynn* and *Dunstan*; and not only the one-thou-

^{*} “It is probable,” commented the World (in Oct., '80), “that Mr. MacKaye will soon be seen as *Dunstan*, in New York, since Mr. Coudock is pledged to appear in other cities, after Nov. 1.”

sandth night of *Hazel Kirke* was to arrive, but was to be followed by its Arabian "thousands" of nights, performed by multiple companies throughout the years. But his acting of *Dunstan Kirke*, in November, 1880, was his last assumption of a part in that spell-charmed play of his. Before the new year should strike, in final rebellion against an intolerable business-alliance, he was to step out of his part, his play and his theatre—never to return to them.

"FRIEND TO THE THEATRE"; A LAST FESTIVAL; GREETINGS OF COLLEAGUES AND SALVINI

During, however, his brief remaining days at the Madison Square, his heart was warmly touched—as on other earlier and later occasions of darkening fortune—by the spontaneous expressions of goodwill, collective and individual, that poured out to him from his fellow actors and associates.

"*Steele MacKaye, friend to the theatre,*" are the words of Mrs. Thomas Whiffen, whose gentle rôle of *Mercy Kirke*, to his *Dunstan*, is pictured herewith in the *Rest at Last* of his drama's last curtain-fall. And those loyal words of hers are echoed by this later comment of "Junot," in the N. Y. Star (Jan. 1, 1888):

"There is no individuality identified with the contemporary stage so strongly buttressed in the affections of his colleagues and the admiration of his friends as Steele MacKaye."

Thus "buttressed in the affections of his colleagues," MacKaye was gladdened by a collective tribute of their "fraternal regard" on his last festival appearance at that little theatre, grown large in renown, wherein he had initiated so many benefits and festivals of art and society, during its crowded ten months of life under his personal management.—The occasion was thus recorded in a press report:

"At the 300th performance of *Hazel Kirke*, last evening, handsome Russian-leather albums, containing 27 portraits of the different performers, in scenes of the play, and a portrait of the author, were presented to the ladies of the audience. At close of the performance, the following resolutions, engraved and very handsomely mounted, were presented in a heartfelt manner to Mr. MacKaye by the attachés of the house and members of his company."

"MADISON SQUARE THEATRE. Friday, November 26th, 1880. JAMES STEELE MACKAYE, Esq., Dear Sir:

"The following Ladies and Gentlemen, engaged at the Madison Square Theatre, are desirous of showing their cordial esteem to the

talented author of the MOST SUCCESSFUL PLAY YET PRESENTED ON THE AMERICAN STAGE, as well as to the *self-sacrificing zeal, untiring energies and honest purpose which have characterised your every effort as ACTOR and MANAGER.*

“We have, therefore, resolved that the 300th PERFORMANCE OF HAZEL KIRKE is a most fitting occasion to show you *our fraternal regard.* And it is further RESOLVED, That each and every *Member of your Company* Subscribe to present you with this humble tribute of their *Hearty Appreciation.* RESPECTFULLY.” (*Signed by all the ladies and gentlemen engaged at the Madison Square Theatre.*)”

Among other felicitations from fellow-artists, came this telegram from Philadelphia, in exchange of greetings from MacKaye to the Italian tragedian, on his theatrical opening there:

“To Steele MacKaye, Madison Square Theatre:—Very grateful for your kind wishes. I hope to witness the six hundredth of *Hazel Kirke*:—*Tommaso Salvini.*”

HUMAN HEARTS IN HANDS AND SEALS

“It’s our Rembrandt luck, my dears!”—comes to me the voice of my mother, in the tear-bright laughter of her wistful refrain:—“Dazzle-shine and shadow-dark—in and out, we go—from ermine to cheesecloth!”

As he stood then, Director of his Theatre’s Art, acclaimed by his peers, in the well-earned “ermine” of his royal endeavours for his calling; glad in the fellowship of his loyal co-workers; keen for the trail to higher peaks of his pilgrimage; yet humble before that vision of his far goal—“the perfected art of his country,”—Steele MacKaye, doer of dreams, characteristically foresaw the bright ascents, but imagined far less vividly the obscure, retarding obstacles, along that ruin-heaped path which would lead him toilsomely on, to strange disillusion, stranger beauties of fulfilment—and noble death.

Enough for him then that he carried home to his fireside, to share with his welcoming partners (in whatever destiny), his wife and children, the hope of a great self-reliance, “buttressed” the more strongly by the firm faith in his works attested by the tributes of that last festival in his theatre, and embodied in those simple “Resolutions,” signed by his associates.

The years fall ever like burying snow, yet rise at times like parting mist, revealing—memory and reality. Beside me now, as I write, lies the little “Russian-leather album,” with its portraits of the play-characters, from among whom looks out at me the strong,

young face * of that indomitable "author" of them—and of myself. Here, too, beside me, on the wall of my work-study, hangs—that engraving of those *Resolutions*, with the autograph signatures (headed by C. W. Couldock) of those my father's then youthful fellow-workers, fifty-three in all, of whom, in 1927, only three, *Effie Ellsler*, *Blanche Whiffen* and *Daniel Frohman*, still survive in their "working harness."

Needless to say, amongst all those fifty-three names, signed by craftsmanly hands, there lurks no "hand and seal" of any Mallory, albeit one of two brethren by that name, in lieu of signing the above "Resolutions" of earnest fellowship in the service of art, had earlier set his hand and seal, as "party of the first part," in "the year of our Lord," 1879, to another and different document dedicated to "services of the said Steele MacKaye," to "said party of the first part," for which the everlasting "covenant" "witnesseth as follows":†

"*FIRST:—The said STEELE MACKAYE agrees to give and devote to the service of the said MARSHALL H. MALLORY the whole of his time, energy and service, for such employment as the said Marshall H. Mallory may direct, in any of the capacities of an author, a manager, an actor, a director, or in any other capacity having any connection with theatrical labour, or with the production, translation, or adaptation of works of art, of talent, or of skill, which can be used for any theatrical purpose, or for any other purpose having for its object entertainments for the amusement or instruction of the public.*

"*And the said Steele MacKaye further agrees that the entire product of his intellectual and physical labour and skill, together with all copyrights and patents, which may be obtained or obtainable therefor, together with the whole of the income, royalties or receipts produced by the said patents and copyrights, or arising from the use of any play, or other dramatic work, or of any invention of the said Steele MacKaye, and also the whole of the income and receipts produced by, or arising from, the use of any of the services of the said MacKaye by any person, either in New York, or in any other place, in any of the capacities herein before mentioned, SHALL BELONG ABSOLUTELY to the said Mallory and be his exclusive property.*

"*And the said MacKaye further agrees, as a means of facilitating the carrying into effect of the covenants and agreements herein contained, that the aforesaid patents, copyright, income, royalties or receipts shall be absolutely and directly assigned, made over and paid to the said Mallory as his exclusive property.*

"*SECOND:—And the said Steele MacKaye further agrees. . . .*"

* Here reproduced, in group of New York managers, listed in Illustrations.

† The exact wording of the "Preamble" is given in the Appendix. The contract in full was published in the *N. Y. Dramatic News*, Jan. 15, 1881.

For witness of the remaining **SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH, FIFTH** and **SIXTH** of those "covenants" to which "the said Steele Mac-Kaye further agrees," the meditative reader may glance from this page in the chapter of a true life-fable, to further passages of fabulous reality.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SHADOW OF A CONTRACT

on
Horizons of *Hazel Kirke*

1881-1924

HANDS AND SEALS—*Continued*

"SECOND:—And the said Steele MacKaye further agrees that he will not print or publish, or authorise or permit to be printed, published or used in any way by any person, any play or other dramatic work, or any invention or other product of his talent or skill for any of the purposes hereinbefore mentioned without the consent of the said Mallory.

"And the said Steele MacKaye also agrees that he will not undertake or begin, or devote any portion of his time to the production or elaboration of any of the works or products hereinbefore mentioned and named, or to the production or arrangement of any other work of a literary or artistic character without the consent of the said Mallory.

"THIRD:—In consideration of the foregoing covenants the said Marshall H. Mallory agrees to pay the said Steele MacKaye, and the said MacKaye agrees to receive as full compensation, except as herein-after otherwise provided, for the whole of his time, energy and services, herein agreed by him to be rendered, and in full payment for all copyrights, inventions, royalties, income and receipts herein agreed by him to be assigned or paid to the said Mallory, an annual salary of \$5,000, payable monthly and in equal monthly instalments.

"FOURTH:—The said Marshall H. Mallory further agrees that if at any time the sum of the profits produced by or resulting from the enterprise in which the aforesaid services of the said MacKaye may have been employed by him, the said Mallory, shall be equal to twice the amount of money with interest expended by the said Mallory in and upon the said enterprises, or if the amount so expended shall be less than \$30,000, at such time as the sum of the profits produced by or resulting from the said enterprises shall be equal to the amount so expended by the said Mallory, with interest, and the sum of \$30,000 in addition; then at that time the said Mallory agrees to increase the before mentioned annual salary to be paid by him to the said MacKaye by a sum which shall be equal to one-fourth part of the net profits produced in each year thereafter from the enterprises in which the services of the said MacKaye shall by him have been employed.

"FIFTH:—The duration of this agreement is fixed at the period of ten years from the 1st day of July, 1879, and it is hereby expressly understood and agreed that at the expiration thereof the said Marshall H. Mallory may have the privilege of renewing the same for so long a period as he may desire upon the terms of the present agreement; and also that at the termination of any year during the continuance of this

agreement or the renewal thereof the said Marshall H. Mallory may have the privilege of terminating the said contract.

"SIXTH:—The said Marshall H. Mallory further agrees that if after the total earnings produced by or resulting from the enterprises in which the services of the said MacKaye may have been employed by the said Mallory shall have amounted to a sum equal to the amount of money, with interest, expended by the said Mallory in and upon the said enterprises, if after such time this agreement shall be terminated as herein provided for, and at the time of said termination any cash earnings or profits of the said enterprises over and above the last above mentioned sum shall be in existence, then at such termination the said Mallory agrees that as compensation to the said Steele MacKaye for the termination of this agreement and the cessation of his salary under it he will pay to the said MacKaye a sum which shall be equal to one-fourth part of the above described existing cash surplus.

"In witness whereof these parties hereto have hereunto set their hands and seals this 19th day of July, 1879.

"Signed in presence of Francis R. Kimball: MARSHALL H. MALLORY and STEELE MACKAYE."

DRIFTING SNOW ON A BED QUILT *

It was dead of winter in a little New England village. All night the great pine, that reached long frozen boughs over the farmhouse ell, had moaned like the sea in rhythmic surges of a storm that racked the roof with mysterious noises of the darkness. All night, through broken panes of a low window under the eaves, the wind had been sifting snow in to the loft chamber, where a drift stood a foot deep on the board flooring near a small wooden bedstead in the corner.

In the grey light of a zero morning, I remember flicking off the fine white silt that covered my patch-work quilt, and shaking it from my hair, as I sprang up in my child "nightie," to hurry bare feet into woolen slippers and shovel that pile of snow out of the loft window.

At my age then of six years and a half, I don't remember surmising how I came to be standing there in that sparse attic room, chattering my teeth as I broke the ice in the water pitcher, for a shivery bath in the tin wash-bowl. I don't remember either that I ever asked my mother where the cosy grate fires and the warm registers of furnace air had disappeared, together with the great pictures and the tall clock and the deep carpeted nursery crammed with toys, and the smooth white linen and silver on the big table in

* Cf. footnote on page i, 387.

the stately dining-room, where my father's place used always to be decked, like a king's throne seat, with a gleaming escutcheon of claret and seltzer bottles surmounting the "cedared Lebanon" of a cigar tray.

All now had disappeared—and my father with them—vanished along with the great city itself. Instead, our home-clan of brothers and the baby sister were quartered in a remote country township, under the narrow roof of ample-hearted kindred. Here, in a household without servants, beset by many drudging cares (while the large New York residence was sub-rented to boarders who absconded without paying their rent), my mother wrote long letters of anxious hope and courageousness to my father, absent on far tours of precarious adventure.

All this was in the winter of 1881-'82, a year later than the closing events of the last chapter. But how or why these strange contrasts in our lives had occurred I then knew nothing, and was to learn only after many years, when I first learned the nature of a legal contract and sensed the life-meanings that loomed from within the long black shadow of that inky document, to which "the party of the first part" was "said Mallory," brother of the editor of *The Churchman*. Such was the "Reverend" aroma of that name in our household, that I was thirteen years old before I had ever attended a church service, and I do not remember ever attending one with my father.

OLD NICK'S FISH-HOOK AND "FOOL ARTISTS"

Both privately and publicly my father acknowledged that he had been "a fool" to sign that contract. He did not blink his folly, nor try to minimise it. None the less does that document illumine the life-problems of an artist, and the reader of Chapter XI in this memoir will understand the kinds of pressure which caused him to sign it. Many a time, before and after "the year of our Lord, 1879," Old Nick has baited his hook with "a fool arist" when he has gone a-fishing for fortune; and often when he has successfully landed his catch, greatly commensurate has been his reward and honour—not the least in our own America. It is not here claimed that the treatment of Steele MacKaye was in such wise unique.

Seldom, however, has the Old One donned the camouflage of a clerical vestment with keener diplomacy, or extended a helping hand to a trustful friend, with more "brotherly" finesse, than he did in these *dramatis personae* of our story toward the subject of this

chronicle, with the aim of acquiring "the entire product of his intellectual and physical labour and skill," in a bond without power to terminate on the part of MacKaye, but terminable or perpetually renewable at the pleasure of the other party thereto.

GEORGE INNESS AND "SO-HELP-ME-GODS"

In a significant analogous case, another "fool artist," my father's early master in landscape painting, George Inness, was meshed in a similar web by another astute middleman—unhaloed, however, by any churchly incense. In the biography of his eminent father,* George Inness, Junior, has written:

"When Father signed the agreement with the firm of Doll & Richards, *he did so without reading it*; and if he had, I doubt, if he would have understood what it meant, with its 'whereases, parties of the first part and second part, to wits, to have and to holds, *so-help-me-Gods*,' etc. But the gist of the agreement was that Doll & Richards should control *all of Inness's works*, and—if I remember aright—*all of his sketches, tools, and everything that was his*, for which they were to guarantee him a certain sum per month. Things went well for a few months, and then payments stopped."

The sequel, divertingly told, narrates how Inness's famous painting, "The Barberini Pines," (afterwards purchased *from the dealer* by the New York Metropolitan Museum) was thus swallowed by the Boston picture dealer—very much as *Hazel Kirke* was gulped—and the sequel concludes:

"I went to a lawyer in Boston with the agreement. The attorney said it would not hold. *No man could deed away his life*. That had been proved in Venice years ago. The case was finally settled out of court—but *Doll & Richards got 'The Barberini Pines'!*"

NONE DEAD NEEDS "SELL HIS LIFE"; MORE DEALINGS
"INIQUITOUSLY UNJUST"

Unluckily, through bad legal advice, the case † of my own father was not settled out of court, but dragged on, through many weary years of the law's delay. The final verdict, however, was similar. My father (being then dead!) was acquitted from any obligation to "sell his life" and future works—but the middlemen got *Hazel*

* Already quoted on page i, 98.

† "The manager of to-day," wrote the New York Times, August 4, 1925, "would undoubtedly long for 'the good old days' when there was no Equity Association, should he be told that Steele MacKaye, in 1879, offered his combined services as playwright, actor and manager to the Madison Square Theatre for \$5,000 a year."

Kirke during the twenty-eight years of its first copyright. But Steele MacKaye was not the only associate of the Mallorys at the Madison Square who suffered from that association. MacKaye's immediate successor there, William Gillette, had his poignant embarrassments with them, and later David Belasco had his own "iniquitously unjust" * contract. In 1925, William Gillette wrote to me:

WM. GILLETTE'S "OWN RIOT"; WM. WINTER ON "FIRE AND WATER"

"At the Madison Square Theatre, as soon as *Hazel Kirke* finished its run there in June, 1881, I was stage director—but only for my own plays. Your father, though, had left a while before that. I suppose you know that your dad had an acute row with the Mallorys—of which (which, of course, you don't know) I was the storm centre, hanging on like grim death to get my play produced. My own riot with them came later. I thought it better to put it off until I'd got what I wanted.† In the case of your father, however, it was *smash and bang* on the instant. He couldn't wait (though, on the quiet, I urged him to.)"

In his life of Belasco,‡ William Winter has thus recounted his impression of this moment in my father's career:

"Steele MacKaye's contract with the Mallorys, as he told me at the time (for I knew him well, and he often talked with me about his affairs), had been heedlessly made and greatly to his disadvantage. *Contract or no contract, however, MacKaye and the Mallorys could not have remained long in association on amicable terms, because they were as antagonistic as fire and water.*

"MacKaye was a wayward genius, of poetic temperament, wildly enthusiastic, impetuous, prone to extravagant fancies and bold experiments, and completely unsympathetic with regulative Sunday-school morality. The Mallorys, on the contrary, were shrewd, practical business men, in no way visionary, thoroughly conventional in character—their whole scheme of theatrical management being, originally, to profit by the patronage of the Christian public. Some persons, like some things, are incompatible. MacKaye resigned and withdrew, while *Esmeralda* was still current,§ and thus the office was left vacant to which David Belasco succeeded."

* So termed by William Winter in his *Life of David Belasco*," pages 276 and 277.

† Cf. footnote on page 383.

‡ Vol. I, page 276.

§ *The Life of David Belasco*: This is an error of date. MacKaye left the Madison Square in Jan., 1881. *Esmeralda* opened (just after the run of *The Professor*) at the Madison Square, Oct. 29, '81. To direct it, William Seymour was engaged (through Daniel Frohman) in August, '81, and remained at the Madison Square till August, 1882, in which year David Belasco began his work there.

BELASCO REMARKS, "ME, TOO!" AND "THAT'S HOW I CAME TO GO EAST"

In my own already quoted interview with David Belasco, in 1925, he has given his personal impressions, gathered after his first coming east, from San Francisco, to New York, which are pertinent at this point. Mr. Belasco said:

"Steele MacKaye created the Madison Square Theatre. He was the Pooh Bah, stage manager, playwright, inventor: *a personality who swept the rock of Gibraltar away wherever he went.* The toss of his hair was like a lion. Where he was, he simply crushed out all others. So the Mallorys decided that the only thing was to get MacKaye out.

"Steele MacKaye himself was too gigantic—too vibrant. The Mallorys were jealous of him and his reputation. They thought they were being wiped off the map by his increasing prestige. Companies of his play were being sent out, north, east, south, west. But he had a terrible contract—like me, too, later! So one day, in a burst of temper, he cried, 'To hell with you!' and departed. He was regardless of money; was always dreaming and writing. . . . Well, he went out; got no redress for his bad contract. Then the Mallorys brought in William Gillette, with his play, *The Professor*. They were then like a ship without a rudder; and at first they thought they could get Steele MacKaye back on their own terms. But he was silent and bitter—except that, if he saw you were 'way down on your luck, then he would pat you on the back and give you his hand.

"At the Madison Square MacKaye brought together for the first time, the Frohman boys *: Dan, business manager; Gus, head of the road companies; and Charlie, the little advance man. . . . After Gillette, the Mallorys brought in Willie Seymour, to stage *Esmeralda*. Meantime Gus Frohman had come to San Francisco, with a *Hazel Kirke* company, and recommended me for the job of succeeding Steele MacKaye at the Madison Square Theatre. *That's how I came to go east.*"

In these pages it is needful to give certain emphasis to the topic of the Mallorys, not in any spirit of rancour, but for the sake of a just historical understanding of the effect of their characteristics and actions upon the life work of my father. As that effect at the time, and in later consequences, by thwarting and retarding his power for creative service in his art, thus influenced the after history of the American theatre itself, it takes on a certain baleful importance, that makes fitting here some specific details of record.

"OH, LORDY!" SHOCKS DR. MALLORY; COUNSEL BANGS "INSISTS"

Concerning his own régime at the Madison Square Theatre, William Seymour told me at the Players (in 1925) this anecdote:

* Charles and Gustave Frohman came to the Madison Square in the summer of 1881, through Daniel Frohman, whom Steele MacKaye had appointed (in 1879) as business manager, five months before the theatre opened, in Feb., 1880.

"At a rehearsal which I was directing there, John Owens became amazed at something and exclaimed, 'Oh, Lordy!' At this, the oleaginous minister, Mallory, who was present, stopped the rehearsal. He said he was greatly shocked by hearing such sacrilegious words uttered by a member of his company; and he instructed me to tell Owens never to repeat that exclamation in his theatre. I can see Owens' expression now, as he hunched away, muttering: 'Oh! So Dr. Mallory don't like Lordy!'"

The first definite frictions with the Mallorys had begun, in 1880, soon after *Hazel Kirke* showed signs of its astonishing success. One evening, my father came into the box office and found there the Reverend Doctor engaged in counting the house-receipts. When my father inquired half jestingly, how he came to be doing this, Dr. Mallory replied he had "even more at stake in the theatre" than his brother had.* Concerning this time, my mother has written to me:

"After our little Hazel was born in August, there were about two months of comparative peace, and then began the trouble which ended in your father's leaving the theatre. He saw these immense sums of money coming in, of which he had such a meagre share. He was egged on by various unwise advisers, Cousin Henry MacKaye among them. *He had as counsel, Francis N. Bangs (the father of John Kendrick Bangs,), one of the most prominent lawyers in New York, president of the Bar Association.*† Mr. Bangs insisted upon your father's leaving the theatre, against his own better judgment; and then, very soon, Bangs was attacked by softening of the brain and died, not long afterward. This left your father in the lurch."

On January 5, 1881, by direction of Francis N. Bangs, "of Counsel for Plaintiff," there was filed in the New York Court of Common Pleas a "summons and Complaint: Steele MacKaye versus Marshall H. Mallory and George S. Mallory; William F. Scott, plaintiff's attorney, 40 Wall Street, New York City." In New York newspapers of Tuesday, January 11th, '81, this complaint was published in full, citing the complete Mallory-MacKaye contract, together with newspaper expositions of the case. In its long after history, the case itself became one of the most famous theatrical cases in American court procedure, for many years cited for study in the law schools.

* Cf. pages i, 376-377.

† Bang's legal advice doubtless served to ignite MacKaye's own pent desires to explode with the "To hell with you!" described by Mr. Belasco.

"FRATERNAL SPECULATORS" AND "PROFITS FOR PARSONS"

The publication of the contract and complaint produced a great newspaper sensation and public opinion was overwhelmingly in MacKaye's favor. "Profits for Parsons" and "Fraternal Speculators" soon became by-words in the press with reference to "the religio-dramatic firm of Mallory Bros." The New York Tribune wrote (Jan. 12, '81):

"The Rev. Dr. George S. Mallory was found by a Tribune reporter at the office of *The Churchman* in Lafayette Place, and showed himself to be a cautious man. 'I really only know what I am told,' he said. 'I have no part in the matter nor connection with it further than giving my brother advice and exercising some censorship over the plays. No, I could tell you nothing except the hearsay of a third person.' He declined to express an opinion as to whether Mr. MacKaye was still manager, and even as to whether there was any disagreement or not. 'My brother,' he said, impressively, 'is the business man and has to do with all these things.'

"A call was then made upon Steele MacKaye. He said: 'I ask any one to read that contract carefully, bear in mind all the circumstances, and then say whether this has not been a deliberate plan to deprive myself and my family of the work of my own brains, and then drive me out regardless of what might become of me. I acknowledge that I was a fool to have signed such a contract, but I was labouring under a delusion. I had met these men in a pleasant way. I had certain ideas and theories that I wanted to put into practical shape to show that I was not an idle dreamer.* I did everything in a man's power for the theatre. I discharged the duties of advertising agent and even call-boy duties that no other management would stoop to, in my zeal for success. And a splendid success was attained both in the theatre here and by the travelling companies. Thousands and thousands of dollars were made for the Mallorys, and the enterprise was firmly established. But no profit and little credit were given to me by the owners.

"Then I found the Mallorys coming to the front and usurping the management instead of wishing to remain publicly unknown, as they had professed. I was forced to endure daily indignities, even to having my name struck off the advertisements—the most flagrant insult that could be offered a manager. They changed prices at the box-office, and officiously interfered, putting me in a false position. My people at the theatre are ladies and gentlemen, and I mean them to be treated as such. They are attached to me, but the Mallorys have endeavoured to make them believe that they were the masters of the company. Yet all contracts have been in my name, and I have been held personally responsible even for what the Mallorys have done.†

* Cf. page i, 376.

† Cf. footnote on page i, 315.

This treatment of me at the theatre was planned with a view to force me to break the contract, drive me out,* and allow them to seize all the results of my work. . . . I did a foolish thing for the sake of carrying out my ideals. I have obtained 20 and 25 per cent. royalty a night at Wallack's, and 30 per cent. at the Fifth Avenue. Yet I signed that contract.'

" 'I understand,' said the reporter, 'that the Rev. Dr. Mallory had no connection with this matter.'

" 'If he says that, he consciously utters an untruth,' said Mr. MacKaye. 'He was the prime mover and his brother but the cat's paw.' "

MACKAYE'S OWN STATEMENT: "THE BITTEREST CONTEST OF MY LIFE"

In an interview with a representative of *The Dramatic News*, MacKaye stated:

"I believe I have been deeply wronged, and I propose to fight for my rights. I know that it will be the *bitterest contest of my life*. All I want is to have my property, which consists of my play and my patents, returned to me, besides the amount that is already due me. Whatever my contract was with these gentlemen, I proposed to keep it. They apparently did not, for they ignored all its provisions, and changed it here and there to suit themselves. I have nothing to say at this time about people who could not keep to an agreement so binding to the other party and so easy upon themselves as this one."

PUBLIC OPINION: "TWO POUNDS OF FLESH, WITH INTEREST,"—"A PIOUS IMPROVEMENT" ON OLD SHYLOCK

Indicative of public opinion regarding this controversy are the following excerpts from published comments at the time:

The Springfield Republican (Jan. 16. '81): "All that the Madison Square is, or can hope to be, is due to Mr. Steele MacKaye. What the theatre has made is not certain, though it seems assured that it has at least paid back the \$70,000 invested and about \$40,000 more—a very snug profit for a couple of parsons to make in a year. The whole business is saddening—that two churchmen should have repeated the oft-told story, ground down a struggling mortal to the dust, and grown rich out of his brains. Probably when the next clergyman wants to purify the stage, by making money out of it, he will find the sinful 'player people' rather shy of him."

The Spirit of the Times: "Why, when the Mallorys had Steele MacKaye engaged as their bond-servant for life, at \$5,000 a year, should they recklessly make him a partner by that free-handed gift of 25 per cent, after they had been paid double, with interest? Why not raise his wages \$5 a week, when he had served five years, or give him \$10 for a Christmas box? You see, there is no safety in half measures. Either be a *Shylock*, or not. . . . *Shylock*, to be sure,

* Cf. Belasco's statement on page i, 374.

did not demand *two* pounds of flesh, with interest—and, at first sight, this looks like a pious improvement upon the grand old speculator; but then *Shylock* would never have been weak enough to make himself a partner of *Bassanio*, by taking only 75 per cent. of the profits, if the venture turned out well; and so, by attempting to surpass *Shylock*, the religious persons may yet come to grief. . . . Now, we do not mean to say that no other enthusiast, like Steele MacKaye, has ever signed an agreement like this before. Inventors, artists, and authors have sold themselves at a lower price to speculators, brokers, publishers, and his Satanic Majesty. 'Give me a fixed income,' struggling genius often cries, 'and you shall have all I can produce to repay you.' But we do mean to say that never before did a pious, religious business man, who edits a churchman paper and occasionally preaches, draw up such an agreement for any genius to sign.

"FAUST"—AND "A SMELL OF SULPHUR"; "GIVING BODY AND SOUL"—
"SUCCESS DUE WHOLLY TO MACKAYE"

"In the MacKaye-Mallory contract, Mr. MacKaye appears to have revived the old mythus, which, in all ages, has represented a man *in extremis* giving himself away, body and soul, to accomplish a purpose. It is remarkable that the little drama in Twenty-fourth Street, which, like *Faust*, commenced with voluptuous strains, should end with a smell of sulphur; but Mr. MacKaye, unlike all his ideal prototypes, has won a great victory. He has shown what he could do. He commanded success when he was able to control the conditions, and he will always be credited with having made his own word good, with regard to stage management, theatrical improvements, and his ability to write a successful play."

The Christian Union: "If the theatre is to be reformed, it is safe to say that it will not be done by ministers assuming the rôle of theatrical managers."

The New York Dramatic News (Jan. 15, '81): "We want no clergymen in the profession, and prefer to see them carry on their own show and leave the stage to itself. . . . In this trouble our sympathy is fully with Mr. MacKaye. Whatever may be the technicalities, one thing is certain, that the great success the Madison Square Theatre has achieved is due wholly to Mr. MacKaye. He was the originator of the idea of the theatre: he baptised it; he opened it originally with one of his plays, before it was rebuilt; he wrote the present play, which has had the longest run ever known in New York; he engaged the company, built and managed the theatre. . . . What did the Mallorys? They furnished the money. That may be a great deal, but without MacKaye that money would have been wasted. It was his genius that made the investment profitable. . . . MacKaye has carried out to the letter the one-sided contract which bound him to the very reverend brothers. The Rev. George S. Mallory, who, until a few months ago, was the pastor of a church on Madison Square, gave it up to run this theatre, for there is more money in the stage than in the church. Yet this is the same person who—full of sanctity and grim with the

atmosphere of the altar—solemnly stated to the editor of the *Dramatic News* that he had nothing to do with the Madison Square Theatre. Surely, then, it could not be expected that he would be less scrupulous in his dealings with MacKaye! . . . So long as there were any doubts of the success of their scheme, the Mallorys were content to employ MacKaye as their figurehead. But the minute success dawned upon him, they incontinently threw him overboard. This seems to be the whole truth of the case. Would any recognised manager in the country stand in their shoes to-day?"

The Chicago Tribune: "*It is just to say of Steele MacKaye that the American stage is more indebted to him than to any other man of this day*; but to this must be added the lamentable fact that he has won almost no reward for his idealism, his energy and his devotion. He has given New York a model theatre, but though he conceived its idea, elaborated all its details, personally applying the best results of science and mechanical art, he has to-day no voice in the management, nor any voice in his own play, *Hazel Kirke*. The Rev. Messrs. Mallory claim to own him, body and soul."

The Continent: "The clauses concerning MacKaye's duties for service and labour would make a West India coolie contractor blush at their far-reaching stringency."

"SOILED CLOTHES" AND TOTAL IGNORANCE; *HAZEL KIRKE* BEGINS ITS SECOND YEAR; GILLETTE ACTS *PITTACUS GREEN*

During many months and years, the Mallorys used every legal device to postpone a settlement of their case. As one of them wore "the cloth," he began, with a travesty of symbolism, by resorting to soiled clothes, as cited in this press report:

"On Monday, Jan. 26th, in the Common Pleas, before Judge Joseph F. Daly, Father Mallory made a motion (denied by the Judge) that the case of MacKaye against Mallory be transferred to the United States Court, on the ground that the defendants are non-residents, and *that they send their washing to Bridgeport, Conn.* This motion is impudent beyond belief, for Dr. Mallory ran an Episcopal Church here for years, on Madison Avenue facing Madison Square; *The Churchman*, which they own, is published and edited in New York; they run the Madison Square Theatre here, and they live here. But as they were cited to produce their books on Wednesday, the motive of this motion is not difficult to see."

On the opening night of the Madison Square Theatre, Feb. 4, 1880, my father made a speech, saying that he wanted to be judged by results a year from that date.—In early February of '81, the *Spirit of the Times* wrote:

"*Hazel Kirke* celebrated its anniversary last Friday, and has entered upon its second year, with no sign of diminished popularity. Every-

body present was given a bronze plaque, stamped with the head of *Hazel Kirke*, and enclosed in a velvet bag. After the performance, there were calls for the author, but by way of response the lights were turned out hurriedly. It would have been more polite to the public had Acting Manager Gillette simply announced that Mr. MacKaye was not in the theatre. . . . *The travelling Hazel Kirke company is at Brooklyn this week*, playing to crowded houses. Indeed the success of the play in the provinces has been quite as extraordinary as at the Madison Square. \$20,000 profit is returned for ten weeks business. . . . Dr. Mallory denies any knowledge of the agreement, the theatre, or the business. This denial, under oath, would have greater weight if the public had not seen him nightly in the box-office, superintending the sale of tickets."

Apropos of the above references, it is pleasant to add that "Acting Manager Gillette," was not there in the theatre on that anniversary evening, but was playing the part of *Pittacus Green* in *Hazel Kirke* at Brooklyn. This I happen to know because, as I write these words forty-four years later, I have just received a letter from William Gillette himself (retired, but now "acting manager" of his own house-boat, "Seventh Sister," in Hadlyme, Conn., July 8, 1925). In it, he gives me the information quoted on page 373, and adds:

"At the Madison Square, in an emergency, I acted *Pittacus* for a few nights, and in *Brooklyn for a week*."

"YE TRUE MYSTERIE OF YE HAZELLE KYRK"

Public commentators at the time did not cease to remind Dr. Mallory that he had "something to do" with the Madison Square Theatre. On the eve of the 450th performance of *Hazel Kirke*, the New York Despatch (April 24th, '81) thus refers to him as "Manager," in a playful imaginary skit:

"One day last week Manager Mallory, on his usual walk down Broadway, passed in front of the ruins of that old Mausoleum of managers, the Globe Theatre, which is being torn down. Several workmen were busily engaged with picks, crowbars, shovels and hands, in removing the dismantled remains. When they beheld the good Dr. Mallory, they ceased their work, and, lifting their dusty hats, silently and reverently bowed their heads, evidently expecting the benediction of grace, mercy and peace which it is the custom of the good Dr. Mallory to offer wherever he makes a halt. . . . With the seraphic smile of a man and a manager who knows no guile, baring his brow—upon which the sunlight rested like an aureole of glory—he bent his knees upon a little mound of débris, and clasped his hands

in prayer. 'Amen' being reached, he saw immediately beneath the pried-up cornerstone, what seemed to be a roll of paper, which he drew forth from the dust and grime.

"'Merciful powers!' he exclaimed, opening the roll. 'It is an old manuscript—faded ink—scarcely legible—the paper yellow with age and the damp of its earthy confinement.'

"'Cotton Mather's first play, perhaps,' remarked the Superintendent of the workmen.

"'No!' exclaimed the good Doctor. 'By the beard of Appleton,* it is—it *is*!— It is the original manuscript of *Hazel Kirke*! Good Lord, how this world is given to lying! MacKaye told me he wrote the play, and here—buried in the walls of an old church—I find this, written in Hebrew—dated B. C. 47 . . . something—it's faded—"Ye true *Mysterie of Ye Hazelle Kyrk*"!"

"'Written before the Flood!' exclaimed the Superintendent.

"'Yes; it must have been played in the Ark. Oh, to have seen Noah play *Dunstan Kirke*—with his daughter as *Hazel*! How sublime!'

"The original manuscript, thus found, is to be seen at the Madison Square Theatre, on exhibition under a glass cover. Steele MacKaye says it is Stewart's original last will and testament. Nevertheless *Hazel Kirke* is still playing. To-morrow evening will be the 450th performance of *Hazel Kirke*, for which a handsome souvenir will be given away."

Another allegorical newspaper skit depicts "the good Doctor" as "the Man-eating Shark of the Madison Square."

GOOD FRIDAY CLOSING: THREE *HAZEL KIRKES* SIMULTANEOUSLY IN
NEW YORK CITY

A few days earlier, the Spirit of the Times wrote:

"The Madison Square will be closed on Good Friday evening *in deference to the religious sentiment upon which this theatre was founded*. Next week Mr. and Mrs. Tom Whiffen start for England, but are re-engaged for next season. Tom Whiffen is the real star of *Hazel Kirke*, and, however Professor Gillette may replace him as *Pittacus Green*, his withdrawal will be a serious detriment to the play."

Concerning this closing of the theatre on Good Friday, the New York Dramatic Times stated, three years later (Sept. 13, 1884):

"The Mallory brothers have long insisted upon giving no performances on Good Friday, closing their companies and letting the actors rest. But I am compelled to dispel the illusion that the Good Friday matter was suggested, or even first thought of, by the Mallorys.

* Aaron Appleton was treasurer of the Madison Square Theatre.

Mr. Steele MacKaye has told me that this Good Friday policy was a part of his general scheme for the Madison Square, and was designed to accomplish just what it has actually gained. He says, moreover, that when he suggested closing the house, Dr. Mallory strenuously opposed it, as a useless loss of a night's receipts. MacKaye urged in vain; so a meeting was called, consisting of Marshall Mallory, MacKaye, and Dr. Mallory. The matter was fully discussed, a vote taken, and the Good Friday closure was adopted by a vote of two to one, the younger Mallory and MacKaye voting down the Doctor, who has had all the credit of this observance, though he did his utmost to prevent it. This policy alone has drawn thousands of dollars to the Madison Square treasury. By the way, if Dr. Mallory has had nothing whatever to do with the Madison Square Theatre, how comes it he voted in a meeting of the Directory, so far back as that time?

"A little word recently dropped by Mr. A. M. Palmer to a N. Y. Times reporter, has important corroborative bearing on this matter, wherein his allusion to Dr. Mallory is certainly significant:

"Then will the management of the theatre remain as it is?"

"I really think it will," said Mr. Palmer. "If I find the business well conducted by the Frohmans, I certainly should not dream of throwing them out. They are very worthy men. I esteem Mr. Daniel very highly. The Frohmans, of course, are hired, and are very energetic. Dr. Mallory, however, though he never comes to the surface, really manages the whole affair. That is very certain."

The swelling success of *Hazel Kirke* steadily increased throughout the winter and spring of 1881. In March, a third extra company was sent out on the road, the first two having been put forth by MacKaye. On May 1, '81, the N. Y. Herald stated:

"The singular spectacle may be witnessed to-morrow night of *two renditions of Hazel Kirke in the same city by companies under the same management*.* One will be given at the Madison Square Theatre, the other at Niblo's. The cast of the latter includes C. W. Couldock, Effie Ellsler and the members of the original cast."

"It is customary now," said the Tribune, "to speak of the book of arithmetic when referring to *Hazel Kirke*."

And the *Dramatic News* exclaimed, when the play's New York close at last was announced: "*Poor old Hazel Kirke! Some of the older people in New York gather their grandchildren about their knees and tell them how they went to see Hazel Kirke in their youth. Steele MacKaye started it, but he had raised a spirit which was beyond his power to lay again. This May week it springs up unexpectedly in two or three places at once—and moves from the boards of the Madison Square Theatre; but not a theatrical man would hazard a guess as to where it won't turn up next.*"

* Daniel Frohman states there were *three* simultaneous *Hazel Kirke* companies in New York City. Cf. his statement, from *The Life of Charles Frohman*, on page i, 391.

HAZEL BOWS TO THE PROFESSOR: "TEARS, CHEERS AND BEERS";
"WEBSTER OUTSUNG"

We have seen from William Gillette's statement (on page 373) that, before he had his own "riot" with the Mallorys, he had hung grimly to his association with them until he could get his own play produced. This production, his first in New York, was his comedy, *The Professor*, which had been produced on the road more than a year earlier. All this time he had been waiting for his chance and, but for his wholly natural desire to have his own play performed at the Madison Square, the 486 consecutive performances attained by *Hazel Kirke* on May 31st, '81, its last night there, would doubtless have reached an indefinite number more; for, in spite of its duplicate companies in New York City, it was still running at the Madison Square with unimpaired success, when it was removed, to give place to *The Professor*.* The last night of *Hazel Kirke* at the Madison Square was thus facetiously recorded by Nym Crinkle, under the caption:

"HAZEL KIRKE HUSHED

Removal of an old Landmark—Congratulations of Critics—Tears,
Cheers, and Beers—Mr. Winter Reads a Poem

"In New York, Change regards neither our temples nor our tastes. One after another, the well-remembered scenes of our childhood are obliterated by the ruthless innovator, who now removes that old, familiar landmark in 24th St., known as *Hazel Kirke*. On Thursday night last, the work of demolition took place. The same day there met in Mr. Palmer's office, the friends of *Hazel Kirke's* youth. Mr. Algernon Sullivan † presided. Mr. George Edgar Montgomery, secretary in mauve gloves, announced that the meeting commemorated the passing of an institution grown indispensable to all their lives, concerning which one critic alone had written some 986 paragraphs, all precisely alike. (*Cheers*.) . . .

"Mr. de Fontaine desired to know in what immemorial era *Hazel Kirke* had first evolved. Mr. Winter remarked that the longer plays ran the better they were. As *Hamlet* and *Rip Van Winkle* were now the best plays extant, so *Hazel Kirke*, in a few more years, would no doubt join the few immortal productions whose sweetness lends all of lambency to life. . . . Mr. Sullivan nominated Messrs. Winter

* "*Hazel Kirke* might still be running at the Madison Square Theatre," said Daniel Frohman, six months later, in an interview (N. Y. Sun, Dec. 18, 1881). "*The Professor* was to have been produced there during the summer of 1880, but it almost breaks a manager's heart to withdraw a play that is running splendidly well; so Mr. Gillette was induced to play *The Professor* on the road a year longer. Now, last summer we couldn't very well postpone its production again, so we had to withdraw *Hazel Kirke*." Cf. page i, 373.

† A prominent New Yorker, organizer of the Edwin Booth Farewell Break-fast. Cf. page i, 354.

and Montgomery as a permanent *Hazel Kirke* committee. Mr. Hows, of the Evening Express, deemed a few tender words at the extinction of *Hazel Kirke* would be fitting, and Mr. Winter read the following poem:

*"Bring tears and sighs unto the bier,
Beat low, O saddened heart,
While friends and foes are gathered here—
The débris of Delsarte!"*

*"Life has no keener pang than this,
When all its joys are fled,
That every word that Webster sang
Of Hazel Kirke's been said."*

*"Low bend the clouds above us now,
The plaintive night bird hums;
And death makes his continual bow
Till John McCullough comes."*

*"Hung be the stage in sable pall,
Quenched be life's merry work.
The ghastly fact remains to all—
There is no Hazel Kirke!
(Tears—and Beers.)"*

AUTHOR'S NAME OMITTED, THIRTY YEARS, THOUSANDS OF PERFORMANCES

Meantime, during the last months of *Hazel Kirke*, the spirit of the Mallorys had abated none of its characteristic quality toward Steele MacKaye. While he was still associated with the Madison Square, they had shown it by dropping his name as manager from all advertisements, and had given orders to their employees that no mention of MacKaye's name* should appear in any announcements or publicity concerning the play or theatre. After MacKaye left the theatre, the Mallorys omitted his photograph from all souvenirs, and then dropped his name, as author, permanently from his play.

"We observe with regret," wrote the critic, Stephen Fiske, "that the portrait of the author of *Hazel Kirke* is now omitted from the

* Mr. Wesley Sisson, then employed by The Mallorys, wrote to me (Feb. 18, 1924): "After Steele MacKaye left the Madison Square, the instructions were for the publicity department to say as little about him as possible, though his play made a fortune, for which he realised neither cash nor credit from the management. It was intimated that he left because he was 'hard to get along with,' but personally there was nothing within my power I wouldn't have done for him—or his son. So I take pride in the record that, in spite of dampening fortune, the output of MacKaye plays (1872-1924) has averaged one a year for over half a century."

little book given to every visitor of the theatre. Though Mr. MacKaye has gone to law with the Brothers Mallory, he is still the author of the play, and *this omission shows a petty malice which should not dwell in the bosom of a pious churchman.*"

"On May 7, '81, Fiske wrote again:—The name of the author of *Hazel Kirke* should be promptly restored to the bills! This does not affect the legal ownership of the play; but *it affects seriously every author, dramatist, composer and artist in the world.* We protest against the theory that an author's name may be suppressed because his work has been purchased, and we hope to see this protest endorsed by Messrs. Winter, of the Tribune, Copplestone, of the World, Percy of the Star; and by every other critic connected with literature and art. What would Mr. Winter say if J. R. Osgood & Co. should strike out his name and publish his books anonymously? The outrage perpetrated upon the author of *Hazel Kirke*, without the shadow of excuse, is an outrage upon every man who wields a pen, and should be properly resented. . . . General Stanley, in *The Pirates of Penzance*, claims that the ancestors are his, because he bought them; but what Gilbert intended as satire Manager Mallory attempts seriously. If he purchased a picture by Meissonnier, would he paint out the artist's name and call it his own?"

But the name of Steele MacKaye, as the author of *Hazel Kirke* was never restored by the management. During nearly thirty years the play was performed anonymously, until the renewal of its copyright by my mother. Even at the present time, I still frequently meet persons who exclaim to me: "What! Did your father write *Hazel Kirke*? We have seen it often, but never knew who wrote it."

Among the materials of this biography, too lengthy to cite here, are numerous playbills of *Hazel Kirke*, stretching down the years and including in their casts the names of many scores of actors, amongst whom most of the prominent professionals of their day took part in the play. But in none of these playbills is there any reference whatever to my father.

RECORD OF LONGEST RUN HELD FOR FORTY YEARS; FIRST PLAY TO HAVE EXTRA ROAD COMPANIES AND TO FIGHT "PIRATES"

The 486 consecutive performances of *Hazel Kirke* at the Madison Square established (1881) a record of the longest run in one theatre of any play in the world's history, and continued to hold that record for forty years longer, until the New York run of *Lightnin'* (1921 *) exceeded the New York Record of *Hazel Kirke*. Because of that, in the season of 1925-'26, the motion pic-

* *Lightnin'* closed its New York run at the Gaiety Theatre, Aug. 27, 1921, after 1,291 performances.

ture of *Lightnin'* was advertised, as a picturisation of "*the play that broke the world's record*" (the record of *Hazel Kirke*).

The close of its run at the Madison Square, however, was but the commencement of a national and international extension of its theatrical dominion, wherein *Hazel Kirke* penetrated to remote towns and villages of the United States, Canada, Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand, England and its "provinces," on to "far-flung" English-speaking settlements in Japan,* India, Africa, and—translated into Spanish, French, German—elsewhere throughout the world. In the light of those incalculably many performances—in addition to its original New York run—during forty-five years (for it is still occasionally played "in stock"), it appears very probable that *Hazel Kirke* continues to hold the "world super-record," of being *the most-times-acted play ever written*; and, in view of the countless articles thus written upon it, the lines in Nym Crinkle's skit almost lose their parody in declaring:

*"That every word that Webster sang
Of Hazel Kirke's been said."*

Published statements as to the number of authorised companies which acted it simultaneously in the United States vary from five to a dozen or more, but besides the "regular" authorised duplicated productions (originally devised and projected by my father) there were for years an indefinite number of "pirated" productions of it, referred to in this notice of the New York Sun, March 24, 1896 (*two years after my father's death*), regarding the long-dragged-out suit for legal "justice," then already fifteen years delayed:

"The suit which the widow of the late Steele MacKaye has brought against Marshall H. and George S. Mallory to recover a share of the profits of *Hazel Kirke* was begun yesterday in the United States Circuit Court. The heirs of the dead author claim that, under his contract with the Mallorys, Steele MacKaye was entitled to a share in the profits of the play. *The trial, commenced yesterday, was in reality begun in 1881.*

"The play of *Hazel Kirke*, memorable for its longest run in New York, occasioned other unprecedented features. *It was the first play to be acted in different parts of the country at the same time by different companies*, and during its engagement at the Madison Square, five or six companies played it in various parts of the United States. *It was*

* *Hazel Kirke* was produced, June 23, 1885, at the "Public Hall," Yokohama, Japan.

also the first play which occasioned any systematic fight against the pirates of plays, for the piece was very extensively stolen. Thus the agitation first commenced over this play is shortly expected to end in a law that will make such play-pirating impossible."

"MORE POPULAR THAN *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*"; "BOGUS COMPANIES" AND "BARRELS OF MONEY"

Bearing upon this popularity of *Hazel Kirke* and the consequent pirating of it, an interview with Daniel Frohman (in the *N. Y. Sun*, Dec. 18, 1881) stated:

"The one thousandth performance of *Hazel Kirke* was given on the 10th of October, 1881, simultaneously by the Ellsler and Cayvan companies in Boston and Taunton, Mass., and since then it has been played right straight along by three companies. It is certainly the most popular play since *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and it is more generally popular than *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, because it can be played with success throughout the South. In New Orleans it was so well received that all one-night engagements in the neighbouring towns were cancelled.

"With each season it grows more popular. In Hartford, for instance, the results of one night last season were \$750. This year they ran up to \$1,200. The same has been the case in many places. Moreover, its great popularity is shown by the frequent attempts made by other companies to play it surreptitiously. In every large city men make it their business to steal plays and sell them to small companies who perform in country towns. Night after night these men attend the performance, take notes surreptitiously, or memorise the dialogue. Then they alter here and there, and introduce songs and dances. *The Two Orphans*, *The Banker's Daughter*, and *Hazel Kirke* are the plays most frequently plundered. Last week we enjoined four companies from playing *Hazel Kirke*. We employ four lawyers to travel all over the country and see that no surreptitious use is made of the play."

"Can you tell the amount of profits derived from *Hazel Kirke*?" Mr. Frohman was asked.

"Yes," he replied. "That is, I can tell you what they amounted to six weeks ago, when I made the last calculation. The amount then was \$100,000."*

"How many souvenirs have you offered?"

"Seven, costing in all about \$8,000. The most costly were the auto-type album of the principal characters, and the bronze plaque with the ideal *Hazel* head."

All of these souvenirs were planned and designed by my father, before he left the Madison Square Theatre. The practical results of his ideas in business management and advertising † proved vastly

* Cf. page i, 370. The date of this \$100,000 calculation coincides with our family sojourn in the little New England farm house.

† Cf. pages i, 392-394.

profitable (to others), but were never credited to him in his rôle of "impractical dreamer." A later comment on piratical road-companies of *Hazel Kirke* is given in this excerpt from a parody—"Eldad Hinckley's Christmas Snap," by Mary H. Fiske (wife of Stephen Fiske, the dramatic critic), in the Christmas number of the *New York Mirror* (1883):

"A bogus *Hazel Kirke* company had struck Eldad Hinckley's home town in Connecticut, and Eldad found a strange apparition on the tavern piazza. He was a perky little man, with Piccadilly collar and cuffs that made his ears and thumbs matters of painful inquiry; so, when this high-funnelled *Lord Travers* sat down, the Connecticut farmer *dropped in* on him, from above.

"'An actor man? Business must pay pretty good, judging by collars and cuffs.'

"'No better in the world!' replied his lordship.

"'I want to know! You see,' Eldad went on, after telling about his possession of \$2,000, 'our parson, 'Siah Bigelow, wants to start a regular meetin'-house paper called *The Deacon at Play*, and he wants I should put my money in it; so does Marthay (Mrs. Hinckley). I'm a-thinkin' seriously on it.'

"*Lord Travers* turned upon him, with sudden interest, exclaiming: '\$2,000! my dear friend, *don't* think of it for a moment! You will fritter your fortune. Theatrical management—that's the bonanza! Why, look at the Mallorys; the Doctor—you've heard of the Doctor?—his case was like yours. He had a meeting-house paper—but he struck out on the broad theatrical sea, and now he's making barrels of money.' 'Barrels?' gasped Eldad. '*Barrels*, I said. He heads 'em up every Sunday and rolls 'em away!' . . .

"Far into the night these new friends discussed the golden glories of a travelling company. *Lord Travers* lighted a match and showed the dazed farmer a telegram: '*Hazel Kirke Co. No. 15 made a cord of money at Akron.*' Another match and another telegram: '*Hazel Kirke Co. No. 26 made a pot of money in the state of Maine!*' Still a third match and a telegram: '*Hazel Kirke Co. No. 34 made a barrel of money on the borders of Canada.*'

"That settled it. Eldad set out for Marthay 'crosslots—an embryo manager and an incipient millionaire. . . . So, when the noon train stopped at the little station, and the band of *Hazel Kirke* got aboard, a 'very tart citizen' joined the theatrical combination."

SCRUB TEAMS; "40 YEARS OF SILK GLOVES"; AND SCRAMBLED EXAMS

This enterprising "combination" must occasionally, I think, be still on the job with their "scrub teams." For as recently as 1922, looking from a car window while stopping at the Connecticut station of Bridgeport (of "soiled clothes" memory!), I beheld an enormous billboard of *Hazel Kirke*," advertising, in letters two feet

high: "486 TIMES IN NEW YORK CITY"—with no date given! Indeed, other latter-day allusions to *Hazel Kirke* still fly on many-prismed wings, from the black-and-white leaves of student "trots," in the academies of universities, to the tri-coloured broadsides of "ads" for drygoods stores; as the following may testify:

In 1918, from a full-paged "ad" of silk gloves (in the N. Y. Sunday Times), I have preserved the reproduction of a poster * depicting a theatre with the bill of *Hazel Kirke*, annotated with the following legend:

"A reigning beauty inaugurated the fashion, with *Hazel Kirke* forty years ago: 'My dear! A silk glove—it's unheard of! . . . But women are quick to adopt the fashion that endures; so, for forty years American women have preferred ——'s silk gloves to all others!'"

In 1924, at a Western university, one of a group of students whom I had just met exclaimed with a genial interest, which scrambled two generations in one courteous *faux pas*: "Oh, Mr. Mac-Kaye! We're so glad you've come at this date, for to-morrow we have an exam in you." . . . "In me?" . . . "Yes, in *both* your plays; *The Scarecrow* and *Hazel Kirke*.—So, please do give us some pointers!"—At the moment, I was at a loss for an unscrambling reply; but if any of those students should chance to read these words, he may perhaps glean some "pointers" by turning back with me now to our birds's-eye view of the 1880's.

1500TH SOUVENIR PERFORMANCE, APRIL, '82; 3500TH, MARCH, '85

Irrespective of "bogus" companies, the performances of the "regular" Madison Square Theatre company went on swelling in number. On April 17th, 1882, the 1500th regular performance of *Hazel Kirke* was given in New York, with a souvenir for the occasion. By March 14, 1885, the performances had reached "more than 3,500." In the New York Dramatic Times, of that date, was printed this letter to the Editor:

"Please be kind enough to announce that, in the Madison Square Theatre *Hazel Kirke* company appearing at the People's Theatre, week of March 9th, the cast is generally considered to be the best that ever interpreted the play. *Hazel Kirke* has now been given more than 3,500 times.' . . . (Note by the Editor): 'We print this communication with a reasonable anxiety to know how much money in *author's* rights has been paid out for this unparalleled number of representations. What have

* Reproduced on page 333, as heading of Chapter XII.

the Mallorys paid Mr. Steele MacKaye for his famous play? If Mr. MacKaye should get only ten dollars a night for the use of his work, the sum total would, even then, amount to over \$30,000."

The extra road companies (the idea for which originated with MacKaye, who drilled the first two companies) became the great fortune-building assets of the Madison Square Theatre Management, and were the basis for the wonderfully successful after-career of the famous manager, Charles Frohman.

"BOYS": A BEGINNING—AND AN ENDING

When I was a small boy, I remember tagging at my father's side up long, dusty stairways, through dark corridors, to a small dim room, where my father conversed for a considerable time with two black-haired young men. One of them hardly taller than myself, patted me on the head, and gave me a sugar lozenge. They appeared to me very pleasant, but decidedly quaint, as they attended my father deferentially to the door, when he was leaving. On the street, I asked him: "Who were those funny little men you talked with?"—"Those?" he answered; "Those are the Frohman boys, Charlie and Gus."

More than thirty years afterward, Charles Frohman wrote to me, asking me to call on him at his Empire Theatre, New York, in regard to writing a play for him. In a very splendid office, he was sitting quietly behind an enormous desk, where his small figure appeared almost in perspective, across piled mountains of manuscript. But I felt at once a remembered charm of personality in his quaintly cordial welcome:

"Why don't you come to see me any more?" he asked, with a twinkle. "You used to come often with your father—and your legs weren't half so long! I'm off for Europe pretty soon, but as soon as I get back—you'll remember the old days with your dad, won't you?—and come again often!"

Then I recalled to him the sugar lozenge, and of course, I promised—but it was a promise I was never to keep; for, about a fortnight later, Charles Frohman met his touching death in the sinking *Lusitania*.

"LITTLE CHARLIE" FROHMAN STARTS "BIG" BY PROMOTING MACKAYE'S
"NUMBER 2 COMPANY IDEA" AND "GIVE THEM PICTURES"

In the published *Life of Charles Frohman*, by Daniel Frohman and Isaac F. Marcossou, the authors state (the italics are my own):

"When Charles Frohman went to the Madison Square Theatre, in 1881, the three Frohman brothers were literally installed for the first time under the same managerial roof. *From this hour on, the affairs of Charles were bound up in large theatrical conduct.* This playhouse, destined to figure so prominently in the fortunes of all the Frohmans, and especially Charles, grew out of the somewhat radical convictions of Steele MacKaye, one of the most brilliant and erratic characters of his time. Steele MacKaye was the first director, and launched its career. *Here were produced the earlier triumphs of MacKaye himself, Bronson Howard, William Gillette and Mrs. Hodgson Burnett.*

"The opening play, *Hazel Kirke*, was an instantaneous success. The little theatre, with its novel stage, intimate atmosphere, admirable company, and a policy that was definite and original, became one of the most popular in America. As an important factor in New York dramatic life, from its very start, it began to rival the prestige of the Wallack, Palmer and Daly institutions. *Its fame, due to the record-breaking Hazel Kirke success, became nation-wide.* Now began an activity under its auspices that established a whole new era in the conduct of the theatre. It was the dawn of a 'big business' development which sent the Madison Square successes throughout the country.

"It was after the phenomenal first season's run of *Hazel Kirke* that Charles Frohman hung up his hat in the little 'back office' of the Madison Square Theatre, to begin work that was to project his name and talents prominently for the first time. That summer, Charles sweltered in his little cubby-hole, but he was enthusiastic about his new job. Gustave and Charles had complete charge of all the travelling companies. *They inaugurated a whole new and brilliant theatrical activity in towns and cities removed from theatrical centres.* With the organisation of these Madison Square Companies (first organised by Steele MacKaye in the summer of 1880. P. M-K), the "Number Two Company" idea had been born. *It was a distinct innovation.* Thus *Hazel Kirke* was played by as many as five companies at one time, and appeared simultaneously in New York City at three different theatres, each with a separate and distinct type of audience. The outside business spread so rapidly that, in a short time, fourteen road companies carried the name of the Madison Square Theatre to all parts of the United States.*"

In the above quotation, it is historically needful to point out certain phrasings which—though doubtless not at all intended to

* The above stresses the commercial nature of these companies. Concerning the artistic nature of some of those road companies of *Hazel Kirke*, and the Mallory's policy in sending them out, Steele MacKaye said in an interview (in the Cincinnati Enquirer, July 13, 1883): "When I was at the Madison Square Theatre and sent out the first travelling company, I insisted that they should be our own company, representative of that theatre. Hence the artistic standing of the travelling company was equal to that of the original production of the piece. But after I was routed out of that theatre, the same illiberal policy, which had stunted me personally, began to stint the public, by putting on the road incompetent companies largely made up of amateurs with low salaries."

claim for any of the Frohmans the originating idea of the policies and innovations cited*—yet, when read in juxtaposition, these phrasings decidedly tend to give that incorrect impression. For example:

“With the organisation of these Madison Square companies, the Number Two Company idea had been born. It was a distinct innovation. . . . Gustave and Charles had complete charge of all the travelling companies. *They inaugurated* a whole new and brilliant theatrical activity in towns and cities removed from theatrical centres.”

Of course, as this memoir has amply revealed, it was Steele MacKaye who inaugurated this “new and brilliant theatrical policy.” During the summer *before* “Charles sweltered in his little cubby-hole,” MacKaye himself was sweltering in the work of launching (in September, 1880) the first extra road company ever sent out, in which he acted the part of *Dunstan Kirke*, in Jersey City, and Newark.† So the “Number Two Company Idea” was born *then*—not a year later.

“Charles Frohman,” the same narrative continues, “was now able to express his genius for publicity. ‘*Give them pictures!*’ he said. He urged a liberal policy in this respect, and the Madison Square Theatre backed his judgment to the extent of more than one hundred thousand dollars a year for pictures, posters, and elaborate printing.”

Concerning this reference it is pertinent to Steele MacKaye’s own “genius for publicity” to quote a sentence from a published interview (in the spring of 1881), in which MacKaye himself said:

“I organised and drilled the first companies that went out on the road from the Madison Square and *invented new ways of advertising the theatre.*”

Among those “new ways of advertising the theatre” was MacKaye’s own policy of “Give them pictures,” which he initiated in November, 1880.‡

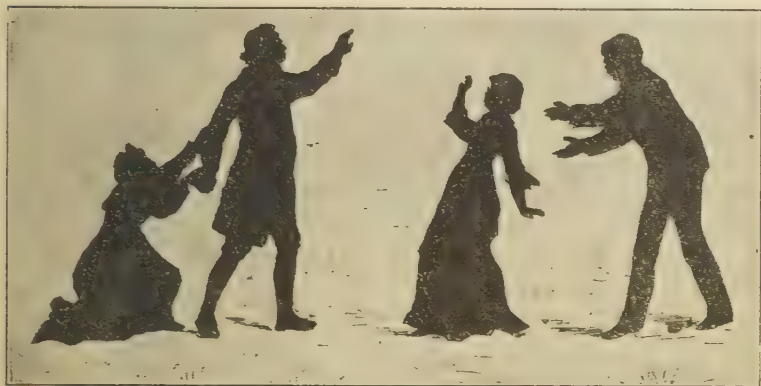
The very pictures (silhouettes and line-drawings by James A. Kelly from photographs taken by MacKaye), some of which are herewith reproduced on the opposite page, were then utilized

* See, on page i, 395, Daniel Frohman’s own statement, in 1884, “to whom honor is due.”

† Cf. footnote on page i, 359.

‡ Cf. on page i, 364, the account of his making many sets of photographs of his company, for use in souvenirs and advertising to be used as far ahead as in Oct. 28, 1882.

by MacKaye in his policy of special souvenirs and were later duplicated on a great scale long after my father had left the Madison Square. Reproduced as illustrations on an eight-page sheet (which this chronicler has in his files), they were sent out broadcast by Charles Frohman and Marc Klaw in November, 1881.



DUNSTAN.—"Begone! I cast thee out adrift—adrift forever from thy feyther's love, and may my eyes no more behold thee!"—"Hazel Kirke."—Act I.



MET, with his pipe.
"Hazel Kirke."—Act 2.



Pittacus
Green



BARNEY.—"Mealy murder!
I can't make this out, for the
life o' me!"—Act 2

This earlier origin of the policy, "Give them pictures," is not, however, mentioned in *The Life of Charles Frohman*, nor is it stated there that it was the money earned for the Mallory management by five road-companies of his play, *Hazel Kirke* (from which MacKaye himself never received a cent) which enabled the

Mallorys to back that policy "to the extent of more than one hundred thousand dollars a year." *

MACKAYE'S PRACTICAL IMAGINATION; HIS TESTED GENIUS
AS ORGANISER

In all this phenomenal growth, the name of Steele MacKaye, who had himself named, conceived, designed and built the Madison Square Theatre, originated "its novel stage, intimate atmosphere, admirable company and policy that was definite and original, rivalling the prestige of Wallack, Palmer and Daly," written and drilled the play into its "record-breaking success," planned and personally projected the "distinct innovation" of the "Number Two Company idea," himself from the start selecting the personnel, and supervising the countless details for launching his creative plans—that name of Steele MacKaye was nowhere mentioned in the Madison Square régime, nor is that name definitely associated, in recorded theatrical history, with the extraordinary, practical, solid "big business" success, which was the definite outcome and concomitant of Steele MacKaye's many-sided creative gifts, not only as a creative artist of the theatre, but as an eminently practical manager.

Instead, his "brilliant and erratic" individuality, his generous extravagances and *personal* disregard for money in itself, because of the prismatic vividness of his personality, have been stressed and overemphasised at the expense of a just estimate of his patient laboriousness and his imaginative foresight in carefully planning and organising great business enterprises †—vastly successful in outcome—which reaped permanent fortunes for many associates—though never for himself.

Overemphasis of Steele MacKaye's "wayward genius," with consequent ignoring of his extraordinary practical gifts, is perhaps only natural—for both are facets of an overabounding imagination, the former more colourful than the latter. None the less, the

* "The organization of the 'road' companies by Mr. Steele MacKaye at the Madison Square Theatre, which Mr. MacKaye invited Mr. Daniel Frohman to extend throughout the country, and which has since been so extensively accomplished, is a feat which Dr. Mallory frequently has said is an arrangement worth \$100,000 a year to the establishment."—N. Y. Times, July 31st, 1884.

† This gift for organisation was a synthetic gift which he inherited from his own father, Colonel James McKaye, of whose related activities in organising the great "Express System" of America, Mr. George Haven Putnam has recently written: "*Col. James McKaye was for some years President of the United States Express Company. His enterprise and courage were important factors in the development of the Express System in the United States.*"

great after-successes in theatrical business of that child of his imagination—the Madison Square Theatre—cannot rightly be separated from his own creative initiative and constructive foresight as a manager. This truth, though it has often been ignored, has also often been clearly recognised; and one case of such recognition is especially worthy of mention, as it comes from Daniel Frohman, than whom no person was more intimately in touch with the origin and continuity of managerial policy at the Madison Square Theatre, or more loyal to the truth of my father's relationship to that policy.

DANIEL FROHMAN BEARS WITNESS; OTHER STRIKING TRIBUTES

On October 25, 1884, he wrote, from the Madison Square Theatre, the following letter, published in the New York Dramatic Times (Nov. 1, '84), with the caption: "*Credit to whom it is due*":

"To the Editor of the Dramatic Times, Dear Sir: The paragraph which you quoted last week, from a San Francisco paper, crediting me with the policy of the Madison Square Theatre, does injustice to one to whom that honour is chiefly due—Mr. Steele MacKaye.—Very truly —Danl. Frohman."

Stephen Fiske, the dramatic critic, wrote, August 9, 1884:

"*Judged by pecuniary results, Steele MacKaye is the most practical manager now before the public. His dreams come true in gold and greenbacks. Instead of being a crank, he is a genius. He demonstrated this at the Madison Square, of which every detail was as practical as it was original. . . . Yet I think that he is best of all as a teacher of the art of acting. He made the Madison Square a school for actors. He had this idea in his brain when he built that theatre, which lived upon his ideas long after he had been turned out of it. He created a new school of acting—the Hazel Kirke school.*"

And "Junot" wrote, in the New York Star, Jan. 1, '88:

"Steele MacKaye was the master spirit of the Madison Square. He was the soul, if the soul there can be, of an enterprise shackled by Philistinism and restrained by greed. Like Michelangelo in the Vatican, he was creating beauties that offended the prurient prejudices of churchmen, and while he realised the dream of a perfect playhouse, he was forced to circumscribe the play of his personages and the universality of his text. Undaunted, however, by these depressing influences, he invented mechanical ingenuities, dramatic intrepidities, that would have made him an impresario in France, or an Irving in England—would, indeed, if he had been his own master, have made him a millionaire in America. . . . No play ever made so much money

for its managers, or so little for its fabricator, as his *Hazel Kirke*. . . . But MacKaye's clerical principals pocketed the cash. True artist, he valued money very little, yet even his enthusiasm was chilled at their ingrate cupidity. There was a rupture, and MacKaye knew the hardship that befalls most strong natures. . . . Adversity, however, has not soured him, nor disappointment deadened the fires of his youth. With the children of the world he held his own better than with the so-called 'children of light'!"

Another recognition is expressed, over twenty years later, in the following excerpt from an article, February, 1907 (in *Smith's Magazine*, New York), referring to A. M. Palmer and Steele MacKaye, as managers:

"If a manager can be judged by the plays he selects, by his accuracy in gauging the wants of his patrons, Palmer and MacKaye have never had peers in the theatrical world."

To the above statement it is pertinent once more to add, that when Palmer was called to the Madison Square Theatre by the Mallorys in 1885, he inherited the reputation of that theatre, which had been established by MacKaye and been firmly endowed by the great fortune earned, for the Mallorys, by his play of *Hazel Kirke*. Again a more recent recognition occurs, May, 1925, in the *Theatre Magazine*. There an article—"The Theatre Beautiful," by Harrison G. Wiseman—states:

"In the old-time Broadway District, there were theatres sentient with the dreams and aspirations of the men who built them. Many of these dreams still live, when the buildings have died or been converted and rebuilt to suit a later generation. . . . Steele MacKaye, who was responsible for the old Madison Square Theatre, *had one vision that was far ahead of his time*. He constructed in his playhouse a mechanical stage which could be raised and lowered. *It was the first mechanical stage ever built—contrary to statements which credit the Germans with the invention.*"

One striking economic factor of this double-stage invention should also not be overlooked. By its use, which rendered their services superfluous, *the nightly salaries of sixteen stagehands* were saved*, thus enabling the theatre management to devote that large expenditure to other ends. This factor alone affected materially the long, auspicious career of the Madison Square Theatre, after MacKaye had left it. Indeed, in a statement, five years after

* Cf. Steele MacKaye's statement on Page i, 410, from an interview, May 23, 1881.

its founding, the permanent success of the Madison Square is thus ascribed, by the *Art Amateur Magazine* (May, 1885) to MacKaye:

"Steele MacKaye is an almost universal genius—author, dramatist, actor, painter, teacher, architect, machinist, designer, manager, inventor—I dare not extend the list for fear I should be suspected of burlesque when I am perfectly serious. He can draw the plans for a theatre; superintend its erection; build parts of it with his own hands; design its decorations; invent novelties for every department; write the opening play; drill and rehearse the company; and, if necessary, act the leading characters. I have seen him do all this twice, and, although once a sceptic, I am now a firm believer in MacKaye and his future. . . . I saw him do it at the miraculous little Madison Square, where I used to go to make fun of him for trying to dig down to the Antipodes. But, out of the pit which had afforded me so much amusement, came, in process of time, the elevator stage, and out of that invention came the success of the theatre."

HAZEL KIRKE AS "A HOUSEHOLD WORD": CITATIONS OF JOAQUIN MILLER, HOWELLS, ETC.

With the New Year of 1881, standing on the shores of disillusionment, Steele MacKaye watched one more vessel of his dreams, builded by his hands and richly freighted with his play and inventions, pass forever beyond his own care and captaincy on to the tide of years. Thence, as we have seen, its cargo of influence was distributed, through ports and channels near and far, into innumerable human lives and millions of homes.*

Joaquin Miller, the California poet, wrote to the New York Star (Sept. 16, '83):

"'If I could only write the songs of a people, I care not who may make the laws.'—Acting on this sentiment as applied to the stage, the founder of the Madison Square Theatre, Steele MacKaye, years ago formulated his high purposes, and went to work, at great cost and peril, to complete them. In the forward stride, this theatre stands easily at the head. There is nothing in the world like it. I count it the cornerstone of a colossal temple of art. The country owes a great debt to the man who built it and sent its influence over the land. The material profits have been something tremendous—nearly \$3,000,000. Right here I stop to wonder why it is, that the man who wrote the first of its plays and built that double-stage, is to-day poor.

* As recently as August, 1925, in a New York editorial, *Hazel Kirke* was cited as an "enduring American myth."—Still more recently, on May 7, 1926, in Boston, at the Tremont Theatre, Mrs. Thomas Whiffen (who first acted the part in 1879) acted *Mercy Kirke* in a scene from *Hazel Kirke*, with William Seymour, in the rôle of *Dunstan*, for the benefit of the Actors' Fund of America.

If *Hazel Kirke* has made so many hundred thousand dollars for the Madison Square Theatre, it is but simple justice that the author be paid something for it. *It would pay in the end to pay for it now.*"

Yet, though unpaid for (to the author), it became the most successful of native plays.

HAZEL, AT 18, PRODUCES A LONG-LIVED OFFSPRING, *WAY DOWN EAST*

But *Hazel Kirke* entered into more than literary and journalistic references. It entered vitally into the stage life of other plays cast in its original mould. Notably, eighteen years after its first New York production, the dramatic elements, supplied by Steele MacKaye to this play of his, took on a renewed form of anonymous life in another enormous popular success, *Way Down East*, the author of which, Lottie Blair Parker, herself attested to the derived origin of her play's essential dramatic material, as the following statement* by Mr. Townsend Walsh makes evident:

"On the first production of *Way Down East* at the Standard Theatre, New York, produced by Wm. A. Brady and Joseph R. Grismer, Feb. 7, 1898, I interviewed the author of that play, Lottie Blair Parker, for an article by me in *The N. Y. Dramatic Mirror*. On that occasion Lottie Blair Parker (who had acted the part of *Hazel* in *Hazel Kirke*, by Steele MacKaye, for a great many times) told me she had absorbed so much of the spirit of *Hazel Kirke* while acting in it, that in writing *Way Down East* she had utilized such material of *Hazel Kirke* as seemed to her appropriate and necessary for building up the situations in *Way Down East*, as for instance where the old man in that play turns the girl out into the snowstorm.

"I myself saw Lottie Blair Parker act *Hazel* in *Hazel Kirke*, to the *Dunstan* of Fenwick Armstrong, in Albany, about 1886.—I also saw C. W. Couldock act *Dunstan Kirke* at the Star Theatre, New York (where Del Bonta had got together a 'scratch' company, including Wm. Cahill as *Barney O'Flynn*), during Couldock's week's engagement † there (Sept. 5-12, 1898)—at positively his last appearance on the stage, just before he died.—TOWNSEND WALSH."

Thus old Couldock, at eighty, had lived to see a vigorous offspring of *Hazel*, at eighteen. The combined records of *Hazel Kirke* and her strong scion, *Way Down East*, in numbers of per-

* The original of this statement, signed by Townsend Walsh, at the Players Club, New York, Dec. 30, 1926, and witnessed there by his Harvard (1895) classmate, Gilman Collamore, is among the materials of this memoir.

† Cf., in Appendix, the cast of this last appearance of Couldock in *Hazel Kirke*, in which he had acted *Dunstan*, during continuous seasons, for eighteen years and a half. Cf. also Couldock's interview, in 1892, with Steele MacKaye's daughter, *Hazel*, on page ii, 368.

formances and players and countless spectators, present an in-computable resultant of my father's inceptive labours in that little summerhouse, at Dublin, N. H., where my mother (with us children) brought him the *hazel* boughs, and he first named his heroine, on that golden September afternoon, in 1876.—Of golden mintage, however, there was no resultant for him.

"*Hazel Kirke*," wrote the Washington Capital in 1885 (August 9th), "that most famous of all American plays, has made more money and caused more tears to flow than any American production since *Uncle Tom's Cabin*."

So, within a few years, *Hazel Kirke* had become a household word throughout America, and its popular vitality had entered into the familiar references of our literature. In William Dean Howells' novel, *Indian Summer* (published in 1886) two lovers are heard conversing:

"'Oh, *don't* you think *Romeo and Juliet* is divine? It's my favourite play. I could go every night. It's perfectly amazing to me that they can play anything else!' To which Colville replied: 'You would like it *five hundred nights in the year, like Hazel Kirke*?—That would be a good deal of *Romeo*, not to say *Juliet*.'"

OF MORE THAN A MILLION DOLLARS—"NOT ONE PENNY"

During nearly thirty years, unidentified with its author's name, *Hazel Kirke* went on ceaselessly amassing, for its contractual owners, a fortune which has been variously estimated as from one to two millions of dollars, in an era when a dollar was worth five times its present value. Of that fortune Steele MacKaye, or his family, received—not one penny.

BUT, AFTER 31 YEARS, THE LOST SHIP UNLOADS AT HOME PORT

After one and thirty years, however, when the copyright had been restored to my mother, and after the rich freightage of the long-homecoming ship had been reduced to the ancestral "three ha'pennies and a farthing" of our destiny, there came to me this letter—dated, October 25, 1911—from my mother:

"Darling Percy: Have you heard of the wonderful *Hazel Kirke* settlement? At last! At last! Yesterday came a check from dear Hal—the first money ever received by the family from the play since it was produced. . . . Think of it! I had never told Hazel one word of it—for fear it mightn't come, after all the endless delays. . . . I want to have something for each of the children bought with this money.

The check was \$138! I don't know how long a time this represents. *But think of it!!!* The moral effect is the greatest thing. *It is ours!!!!*

"CASHLESS GLORY" AND "REFULGENT SUNLIGHT"—OF DEATH

Thirteen years later, and thirty years after my father's death, during my mother's last illness, my father stood again, in spirit, helpfully at her side, as the acknowledged author and owner of *Hazel Kirke*; for then a modest sum was secured for her, through my brother, Harold, for the motion picture rights of that play.

At the age of seventy-eight, from her sick bed in Washington, a few weeks before her death, she wrote me for my birthday (in March, 1924) a gay yet pensive quatrain. It was at the time when public conscience had just been outraged by the unearthing of the Tea Pot Dome scandal—an inglorious betrayal of human trust, which may doubtless have recalled to her remembrance another of strange analogy recorded in this chapter—back in the time of my childhood, when my father's friend, Dr. Alger, had transcendently dubbed me "the White Prince," perhaps because my hair was black, and my "princely" crest was frequently guled with mud pies.

These are the words which my mother then wrote me—written with a pencil, in intervals of great pain—words, whose overtones are tremulously vibrant, with her own buoyant personality, throughout the main theme of this memoir—the last words her hand ever wrote:

"CASHLESS GLORY

or Cash less Glory—Which?

*"No need for Tea-Pot Dome to tell;
My White Prince knows the answer well.—
In spite of sometimes seeming ill,
He'll trust the 'Cashless Glory' still!*

"Written on my back—with the refulgent March sunlight—flooding my room. . . ."

CHAPTER XIV

A BITTER FIGHT BEGUN

A Dream Theatre and "A Fool's Errand"

New York, Brattleboro, Norton, On Tour

Jan., 1881-Jan., 1882

ANCESTRAL RHYTHMS: ONCE MORE "A MIDLAND WANDERER"

THE STORY OF STEELE MACKAYE IS CADENCED TO A RESTLESS movement of rhythmic rises and falls. Like the sea on New England shores of his ocean-faring ancestors, it beats on the rocks of circumstance with ceaseless resurgence. Like the highlands of old Scotch *MacAoidh*, its contours plunge from sun-glowing crags into gloomy mist and moorland, to lift again and again upon lofty eminences, disclosing radiant horizons. As he bore in his blood no prairie heritage, so nowhere does his fluent life-trail ever straighten to a stretch of flatness. Always, up or down, the path is climbing—and never far from the tremor of rushing waters. Born on that verge, where the vast Erie coils its spirit for the imminent leap of Niagara, his spirit, too, was torrential, rapid with turbulent whirlpools, and prismatic with hues of its own bursting element.

With the new year of '81, his recoil to wrench himself free from a contracting "covenant" with Pharisees swept him, for some years, from the direct current of his life course, into a turmoil of bewildering struggles to regain once more that calmer equipoise which his philosophy recognised as essential to his creative progress, but his temperament (foiled by a maze of unkindred financial problems) stood fiercely embattled against. So once more, in maturer life, as in his boyhood, the waves of wander-years recurred. And now, by the same urgency of "free will" which had prompted the "non-conformity" of his Scotch forbears, yet oddly by a direct reversal of their ancient policy, he turned his back upon all churchly catechists and "legal" Covenanters, and became, for a time, a zealot-hearted wanderer in that then strange midland realm between the buttressed strata of organised society—the romantic nomadic Arabia of stageland.

TERRA INCOGNITA—"CAST ADRIFT"—FAREWELL TO OLD FRIENDS

There the boundaries of its inner kingdom, though partly invaded by a scrambling democracy, lay in those days still largely

uncharted and mysterious—a *terra quasi incognita*, unannexed as yet by the commercialist and unstandardised by the routineer. For some years, previous, in affectionate fraternity with his stage associates, he had already been one of the proclaimed princes of that realm, wherein his life had been occasionally nomadic; yet the time devoted to his deep-rooted ties of home (albeit our home itself was often a star-hitched covered-wagon), as well as to communion of ideas with groups of friends and followers, had till now almost equally balanced the strenuous hours he devoted to his professional activities. From now on, however, he was swept increasingly into a necessary absorption in the world of his work and dreams, “cast adrift” on the tides of which he was carried, for a time, physically upon long inland journeys. On these, during the twelve-month of ’81-’82, he spent from nine to ten months in campaigns of theatrical touring, largely of one-night stands.

In presenting the recorded data of his strange career, this chronicle must necessarily detail more of outward fact than of inward mood and the growth of dreams. No biographer can truly know or record the complex, evanescent thoughts and motives of his human theme; but out of valid record gradually the incorporate spirit may arise in color and form, and take on, once more, body and presence of the living man who created them. That is the motive of this memoir. Early in January, ’81,* Steele MacKaye wrote to his former associates at the Madison Square:

“I am extremely sorry that I am separated from my friends of the Madison Square Theatre. It is not by my wish or act: on the contrary, I have been driven into a suit with the management, to protect my rights, they having repeatedly refused me any satisfaction whatever. There was left to me no other choice but this: either to submit, absolutely and indefinitely, not only to all of their peculiar devices, some of which may be known to you, but to very serious wrongs in property and reputation, or to appeal to the court.

“I have acted only under the advice of good counsel, and have made many patient efforts to obtain a settlement such as might protect me from further loss, but without the least success. I was still willing—anxious, indeed—to remain at the Theatre as manager while the gentle-

* In early February he appears to have acted at some benefit in a scene from *The Lady of Lyons*, with Rose Coghlan, for on Jan 30th, ’81, William Winter wrote to him (referring also to *Moulinet* in *Rose Michel*):

“My dear MacKaye: Will you, in person, ask Miss Coghlan to act *Paulina* in the scene with yourself? She is already down for *Lady Teazle*, in the *Talk School*, and perhaps it is asking too much to play twice. Miss Lillian Clews Clark has been mentioned for the part. Failing Miss Coghlan, will you speak to *her*? Also to *Mme. Ponisi*, for the *widow*. Don’t forget to speak to Mr. Frankau, about *Moulinet*.”

men and ladies I had engaged should remain there; and I have actually done so, since the suit was begun, as long as it was in my power.

"I desire very much that there shall be no trouble to any of you; and I am advised that my troubles need not at all affect any of you. I hope, and I write this to express my desire, that you will all remain at the Theatre and give no trouble to any one who may assume the duties of manager. I know that, while you do remain, you will do your duty well and preserve that harmony in the Theatre which has always been my great pride."

SIX BOYS TO RAISE: WASHINGTON IRVING'S STYLE "ABOVE THE MID-RIB"

His battle to regain his lost professional power was now before him. In addition, however, to this professional urge was the never-ceasing spur of needs for his large family. Aside from other dependents, the nurture, health, clothing and schooling of half a dozen children were no light burden for an impetuous artist at this poignant crisis in his career.

I can remember, at about that time, being accompanied by my father on Sixth Avenue, from our home in 44th Street to 42nd Street, where he would leave me at the door of Fowler's private school, in the old cupola'd building opposite Bryant Park, still standing in 1926. In classroom, I would sit at a tiny desk in my Scotch kilties, awesomely envious of the only "big boy" in short trousers—at recess marching behind him, in a two-by-two file, across the street into the Park, where we would break ranks for a blithe half hour of play, among the sunny lawns and serene statues. There, from his high pedestal, the great bronze bust of Washington Irving would peer down at me with an air quizzically jocular. He seemed particularly content with life, relieved of all anatomy below the mid-rib. I had (I remember) many quaint ponderings upon that incorporeal style of Mr. Irving—a style so admirably adapted to the pursuits of pure literature!

I could hardly imagine then, as now (in my rôle of biographer), how my dear father, beset by a hundred duns, must devoutly have prayed that some biologic deity would rebuild his own offspring on that pleasant head-and-shoulder pattern—and so relieve him of all further need to provide for their middle anatomy by offering his body and soul to the Baal of butchers' and grocers' bills.

A NEW THEATRE IMMINENT; "AN OLD WAY TO PAY NEW DEBTS";
EUGENE O'NEILL'S FATHER "IN THE SAME FIELD"

Thus, both for his artist career and for his family, facing "the bitterest fight of his life," Steele MacKaye set forth to meet it

with high confidence and the zest for battle. Under multiple pressure (reversing Massinger) as an *old* way to pay *new* debts, he turned once more to his perennial asset, *Won at Last*, as a means also to regather a company of skilled actors for the project of his dearest desire, then apparently imminent—a new theatre of his own. During the next four years, this Dream Theatre hovered on his sight, like a bright mirage, until again, by pertinacity and invention, he held it in his grasp—a structure of organic beauty, tangible in stone and tapestry—and he entered there once more into his own province of author-director. But the midland trail to its door was to prove arduous and bleakly winding—across a desert with many bitter wells and a few flowering oases.

During the early spring of '81 he was gathering his company of actors, and rehearsing them (March 19th to 26th) at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York. Among them he desired to engage James O'Neill, who was, however, prevented, as explained by him in this note to my father (dated from "Adams House, Boston, March 10th, 1881"):

"I was forced to leave for this city without any definite information as to how long Mr. Stetson * wanted me, and did not learn from him until last evening that I should be here until the 18th. *Am very sorry, as I should like to play the part you mentioned in Won at Last; think it would help me in New York. Hoping we may labour in the same field in the near future, I remain, Yours Respectfully—James O'Neill (Globe Theatre).*"

Already, in San Francisco, James O'Neill had acted in *Won at Last*, in a notable cast, under direction of David Belasco; † and soon after the above letter, he was to act in a road company of *Hazel Kirke*. ‡ Later on, it was to O'Neill that MacKaye, in 1886, gave an early reading of his final version of *Paul Kowar*, § with a view to O'Neill's acting the title rôle. Throughout the rest of my father's life, the personal associations of O'Neill and MacKaye were those of warm mutual friendship, amidst "labour in the same field"—a happy heritage of work in the American theatre which has been handed on by them to their sons.

"I remember my father often speaking of yours with the greatest

* Manager of the Globe Theatre, Boston.

† Cf. page i, 278.

‡ Cf. on page i, 406 concerning O'Neill's engagement, by M. H. Mallory and Wm. Gillette, for this purpose.

§ Cf. page ii, 64.

admiration," "Eugene O'Neill has recently written me; and often, at the Players Club, New York, before his death, James O'Neill has charmed groups of friends by his stories of my father, as he enthused with recollections of their comradely times together, "in the old days." In Philadelphia, on the eve of his play's opening, my father wrote to my mother (Sunday, March 27, '81):

"*All the company have worked hard and harmoniously with me, and I believe the first night performance will be better than that of this same play at Wallack's, in spite of my having had my people together only seven days instead of seven weeks. Scenic rehearsal to-morrow morning: I am pretty well used up, but shall be all right for the opening. Hugs to my precious precious children, and to you unutterable love.—J. S. M.—Write to Charles Reade. You know how I feel about his play.*" *

In a note to my father, at the same time, my mother wrote from New York, referring to the legal battle then under way:

"Dan Frohman, whom I saw last night, appeared delighted you were in Philadelphia. He said *there seems a possibility of an injunction here in town*. I should think Monday night would settle that question, and so I told Dan. I shall be anxious, till the opening is over. As to *John Fleming*, there is only one rock you have to fear—the end of Act 3rd. Hold your forces well in reserve there, as you always do when most effective. The boys send you their hearts full of love. With as much faith as hope, your *Mollie*."

WON AT LAST REOPENS; OLD ASSOCIATES FRIENDLY; MALLORYS
"MUCH WORRIED"

On March 28th, *Won at Last* opened in Philadelphia at the Chestnut Street Theatre, for a week's run, receiving there a warm welcome by public and press. The latter commented:

"*Won at Last* is a very much finer and stronger piece than most plays of American composition to-day. As the hero, *John Fleming*, Mr. MacKaye was grave, dignified, earnest, imbued with life and interest. *The Prof. Tracy* of F. F. Mackay † was a tenderly humorous piece of character acting. . . . After the play, Mr. MacKaye gave a supper to his actors, in commemoration of the success won. . . . *It is understood that the plans for his new theatre are complete, and the only*

* Probably Reade's *Masks and Faces*."

† A photograph of F. F. Mackay, as *Prof. Tracy*, and *Steele MacKaye*, as *John Fleming*, is listed under the illustrations. The butterfly-net which the Professor is clapping upon the back of *Fleming*, afterwards (saved by our thrifty archivist, "Aunt Sadie") turned up in our attic, and I used it as a boy in gathering specimens for my own insect collection.

impediment to beginning its construction is the necessity of obtaining the consent of some of the owners of the selected site, who are now in Europe. The new house will probably accommodate about one thousand spectators."

The loyal interest of his old associates in this opening of his fight with the Mallorys is suggested by these two notes to him: the first (March 30th) from the actor, Dominick Murray, who was then still acting in *Hazel Kirke*, at the Madison Square; the other (April 1st) from the theatre's treasurer, A. Appleton (whose "M. H." refers to Marshall H. Mallory):

(1): "Frankau and I are greatly consoled by hearing of your success, which Dan Frohman has told us about. More power to you! I trust this does not sound like treachery to the devout brothers!"

(2): "Your friends here will be happy to hear the good news. Considering the season and weather, your financial figures are splendid. Oh, if the Mallorys knew it, they would go wild! They seem much worried, for they are always consulting and holding private meetings; but they will not stop you. They dare not. They are too cunning. They are making arrangements for next season. They have Mrs. Booth, and last night 'M. H.' and Gillette went to see O'Neill, with a view of engaging him. May success greet you in all your undertakings!"

At my father's hotel in Philadelphia, his pupil, William R. Alger, came to visit him. On returning to his home in Boston, Alger wrote to my mother (April 2) the following note, in which he refers to money, sent by John McCullough in payment for lessons in acting previously given to McCullough by MacKaye, the money being now forwarded to Alger, who had advanced it to my father in the interval of its non-arrival:

"Dear Mrs. MacKaye: I had a charming visit in Philadelphia. *James was looking superbly handsome*, and was very kind to me. *I never before had so high an estimate of his genius and knowledge, or of the value of his teachings.* . . . This morning, on reaching home, I found a splendid letter from John McCullough, *enclosing a check for \$550.* So all was right as you thought. A thousand blessings on your nest of doves!—*W. R. Alger.*"

From Philadelphia, *Won at Last* travelled for two weeks of one-night stands in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey and Connecticut. Through the following comments of the critics, during this route, float rumours of its author's imminent new theatre and "a million dollars":

"SKIRMISHING IN THE PROVINCES"; "\$1,000,000" IN THE OFFING

(Newark Advertiser, Mar. 30, '81): "Steele MacKaye, having founded a theatre and a play—for *Hazel Kirke* seems to be established for all time—has gathered new elements about him, and skirmishes in 'the Provinces.' In New York, there is a new theatre in prospect for him, so he will doubtless double his honours by founding another, perhaps with a *treble* stage! The gentleman is a persistent worker, and cannot be held down."

(N. Y. Post, April 8): "The plans of his new theatre and the buildings connected with it are all completed, and the question of site will probably be speedily settled. It is said that the capital to be invested in the enterprise will be between \$1,000,000 and \$1,500,000, and that the investment is made not upon speculative theory, but sound business principles. . . . Lawrence Barrett, Dion Boucicault and Steele MacKaye will all play against each other in New Haven next week, and their managers are wondering where the audiences are to come from."

(N. Y. Telegram, April 9): "The four managers foremost to-day in New York, are Messrs. Daly, Wallack, Palmer and MacKaye. Of these, the youngest, Mr. Steele MacKaye, is at once the most original and the most purely intellectual of managers in America. With new inventions buzzing in his brain, he now plans to build a new theatre somewhere below Fortieth Street, as an improvement on the one he gave birth to in Twenty-fourth."

On April 18, '81, *Won at Last* opened in New York City, at the Bijou Opera House, for a two weeks' run. These comments of the press suggest how warmly the public sympathised with its author in this opening campaign of "the bitterest fight of his life."

"MAGNIFICENT TESTIMONIAL" AT BIJOU; POEM TO MACKAYE;
WAITING "TO SIGN CONTRACTS"

"When Steele MacKaye stepped upon the stage at the Bijou, last Monday, the unanimous applause, again and again renewed, shook the practiced nerve of the author-actor, and brought premature tears to the eyes of the blasé *John Fleming*. Mr. MacKaye, recalled after every act, could only stammer forth his thanks for such a magnificent testimonial of sympathy and appreciation.* But sometimes the stammering of genius is more eloquent than the glib phrases of talent, and the audience felt that Mr. MacKaye thoroughly comprehended their sentiments towards him as author, manager and actor." †

* Expressing a like sympathy, there appeared, Apr. 19, '81, in the New York Evening Post, a long poem—*To Steele MacKaye*—by the dramatic critic, Lancaester. An excerpt is included in the Appendix, V. 2.

† The same article continued: "There is a rumor that, under advice of his lawyers, to force an immediate issue with the Messrs. Mallory, MacKaye will at once produce *Hazel Kirke* with his new company. This is a lawyer's idea; but it is not professional. A single performance of *Hazel Kirke*, at an extra matinee, would raise all the legal questions involved." This "lawyer's idea" was conceived by MacKaye's counsel, F. N. Bangs, and proved to be disastrously expensive and futile.

"Steele MacKaye (wrote the *Spirit of the Times*, May 7), his new company and *Won at Last* have made their mark at the Bijou. This is their last night; to-morrow the company starts westward, leaving Mr. MacKaye behind to sign the contracts for his new theatre. Mark Pendleton will play *John Fleming*, and Mr. MacKaye will resume the part next week. *Hazel Kirke* is in rehearsal, to be ready for eventualities in Chicago."

"*To sign the contracts*": thus tantalisingly near, at that moment, appeared the consummation of his dream theatre! But no contracts were then signed, and his immediate financial need for taking again to the road probably lost him then his opportunity.

TOURING AGAIN; HENRY MILLER ON "BRILLIANT, VIRILE,
ROMANTIC" MACKAYE

The spring tour of *Won at Last*—aiming to garner financial resources for his battle with the Mallorys—extended through Rochester, Buffalo, Chicago, etc., as far west as Louisville, Kentucky. These comments are representative of many others which greeted his tour:

(Rochester Democrat, May 9): "There are very few gentlemen upon the dramatic stage who have a reputation more enviable than Steele MacKaye. As a dramatist, he is pre-eminently a master of homely pathos, which in *Won at Last* is deftly interwoven with humour."

(Detroit News, May 13): "*Won at Last* is a play which deserves to live among the standard treasures of the stage."

MacKaye rejoined his company at his birthplace, Buffalo, where *Won at Last* played for three nights at the Academy of Music, opening Monday, May 9, '81. There, for the first time, he was met by another leader of our theatre, valiant and picturesque—Henry Miller, then a youth, fresh from "the backwoods of Canada." Thirty-four years later (Dec. 4, 1925), a few weeks before his widely lamented death, Henry Miller himself wrote me the following recollections of my father, in whose *Hazel Kirke* he himself had acted *:

"Dear Percy MacKaye: Regarding my memories of your brilliant father, please allow me to ramble on, without attempting literary style or sequence. . . . As a lad, I took elocution lessons in Toronto, Canada, from Mr. C. W. Couldock who, a year or so later, was good enough to secure a position for me with Madame Modjeska. It was en route

* Cf. page ii, 20.

from Toronto, Canada, to Philadelphia, to join Modjeska, that I stopped over (May 9, '81), in Buffalo, where Mr. Couldock was playing in *Won at Last*, in which your father was acting the leading rôle.

"How well I recall meeting this brilliant, virile, romantic person—Steele MacKaye! He was of a type so nearly extinct. How vividly I remember his charm and his courtesy to a boy whom he had never heard of nor expected to see again. There were such qualities in those days. Of course, before introducing me, Mr. Couldock had told me who and what he was, for I am ashamed to say, in the backwoods of Canada, Steele MacKaye was a name unknown to me, but distinctly to be before me for years to come. In my new-found world I had many idols, but among them Steele MacKaye was an individuality quite apart. He was a composite of many forces and would have made a name in any domain of power and intellect. Then, of course, there was that great outstanding charm of his! What ever has become of this type of man, this super-man, withal so gentle and unassuming. Of your father I can personally cite only the privilege of his acquaintance, the constant encouragement of his kindness which he, in his many brilliant activities, was never too busy or indifferent to give.

"When we do not recall Steele MacKaye as a brilliant actor, it is because we remember him as a brilliant author, or vice versa; and if as neither, it is because we remember him as the brilliant man. I hope you know my meaning. I know of another man who paralleled him somewhat in these particulars, as to the theatre, and that was Dion Boucicault. Here was another man whose art as an actor was confounded and confused by his gift as an author.

"They say that age is always comparing the present, unflatteringly, with the past; but, to speak my mind, the individualities of the theatre of to-day cannot compare with those past individualities, that rise before my mind in shadowgram: stalwarts in battalions! As I look back upon those boyhood days, I see myself standing on the threshold of the theatre, looking upward toward MacKaye, Wallack, Charles Thorne, Charles Coghlan, John Parselle, Frank Mayo, Booth, Barrett, the Elder Sothern. Surely there was a poise, mental and physical, a fine sense of comradeship, and a kind of royal blood in them. I won't believe that this was all a boy's imagining.

"And so, my dear Percy, here are my very inadequate and humble, but most sincere remembrances of your gifted and beloved father. Overlook my incoherence and accept my lasting friendship.—Ever sincerely yours—*Henry Miller.*"

"THE SENSATION OF THE TIME"; NEW THEATRE FOR '82-'83

At that time of Henry Miller's visit to Buffalo in '81, Ariel N. Barney, a well-known journalist, stated in the Buffalo Times:

"Steele MacKaye's withdrawal from the Madison Square Theatre is the sensation of the time. *In the hearty encouragement of his brother professionals, his reception at the Bijou, New York, two weeks ago,*

was one of the most remarkable ever accorded to an actor and dramatist. No attempt there to enjoin him was made by his former employers. *His case is causing immense excitement* and, to test it, he may produce *Hazel Kirke* at Chicago in opposition to the Madison Square road Company which is playing there.* . . . *The structure of his new theatre in New York will open with the season of '82-'83. He intends to make it the finest theatre in existence.* In addition to the elevated orchestra and double stage, will be a novelty he proposes to call 'the invisible chair,' already patented. At the end of a performance, you rise and, by touching a spring, cause it to fold from sight on the floor.†

"When I first met Mr. MacKaye at his New York home, what surprised me most was *his library*. Solid volumes, in old-fashioned dress, predominated. He had Tyndall, Huxley, and Spencer complete, the old philosophers and essayists, the arts and sciences, but no light literature. I picked up a well-thumbed volume in red, and found it to be a treatise on civil engineering. The walls of the room were forests of oddly original bric-à-brac, with openings here and there for rare old paintings—not at all the surroundings of the usual American playwright."

STAGE MACHINERY, 66,000 POUNDS; "THE INVISIBLE CHAIR";
A SELF-SUBSIDIZING PLAN

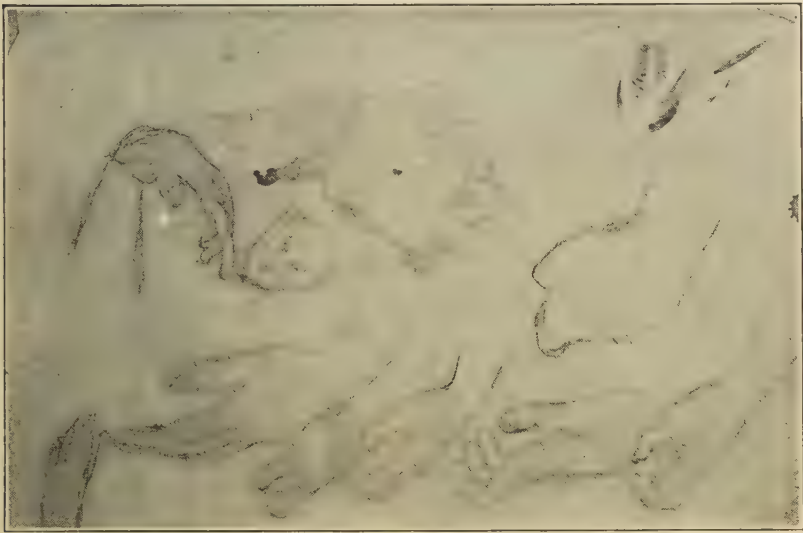
In May of '81, MacKaye and his company were acting in Chicago. From a lengthy published interview there (May 23), these brief excerpts express some of his ideas on the theatre:

"I consider the 'star system' the curse of our American stage. . . . *To create breathing stage pictures*, seeking a harmony of perfection artistically beautiful, morally and socially exalting and true: that was the deep desire which led me to invent *the double stage*—an invention, by the way, very practical, as it not only enables the most elaborate scenes to be changed in just forty seconds, but thereby *saves per night the salaries of sixteen stagehands*. . . . On the same principle—to *focus attention, time and money on the creative art of the stage picture itself*—my invention of the elevated orchestra serves to direct the audience's attention away from the merely physical motions and antics of performing musicians, and to *concentrate it upon the music itself in its essential, spiritual function of tone, harmony and imaginative appeal*. For the same reason, *I am unalterably opposed to gorgeously decorated theatres. They detract from the stage picture in which all beauty should be concentrated*. All other surroundings of the audience should be quieting, restful and subdued.

"I have emphasised these ideas in the Madison Square Theatre, but not by any means to such extent as will be done in my own theatre. This will be built, this year, in New York City. Wealthy gentlemen there have subscribed sufficient means for this already, and now we have

* This test was not attempted till September, when his production of *Hazel Kirke* was enjoined by the Mallorys. Cf. page i, 418.

† Cf. page i, 351. This device was modified in his Lyceum Theatre chairs, 1885.

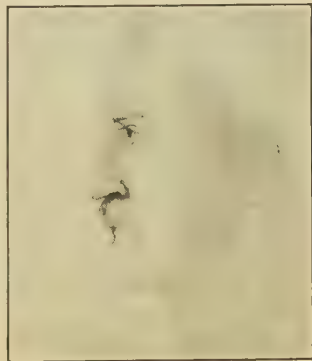


STUDIES IN EXPRESSION

I. Six Portrait Heads of Steele MacKaye in "A Fool's Errand," 1881 (page i, 406).

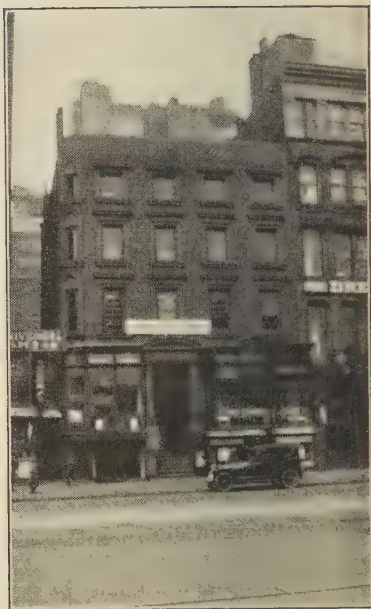
II. Expressions of the Hand; drawn by Steele MacKaye, about 1871.

III. Profile of Col. James McKaye, drawn by his son, Steele MacKaye, about 1871.





JOHN McCULLOUGH, TRAGEDIAN
Pupil of Steele MacKaye (page 270).



23 UNION SQUARE (1926)
*MacKaye's Second School of Expression,
1877-'80.*



CHARLES W. COULDOCK AS *Prof. Tracy*
in MacKaye's "Won at Last", 1879.



STEELE. MACKAYE (left) AS *John Fleming*
and F. F. MACKAY AS *Prof. Tracy*,
1881 (pages 363, 405).

only to secure a desirable site. For this theatre I have invented several peculiar appliances, and when the building is completed, I feel sure that I shall have the most perfect theatre structure in the world."

The imminence of this theatre, backed by capital of "from \$1,000,000 to \$1,500,000," is suggested by these specific details—with reference to installing the "greater double stage," planned for it by my father—in the following letter from a foundry company, dated "New York, March 8, 1881:

"Dear Sir: The total weight of the machinery you ask for is 66,000 pounds. We offer to build it and deliver in New York City for the sum of \$4,500, and to put up the Hoisting Machine in place, without extra charge. We trust you may be able to place the order with us.—C. H. Delamater & Co., per Jas. Reynolds."

At about the same time, my father's architectural plans for this theatre were drawn up, under his direction, by Kimball and Wisedell, the same firm whom he had formerly chosen to construct the Madison Square. One of these architectural drawings, sketching the exterior of the projected theatre, here reproduced,* suggests the combination of social functions which MacKaye's new plan was designed to serve.

His plan was then wholly novel, and appealed by its aim of practical idealism to a group of wealthy capitalists, of whom the chief was George W. Childs, of Philadelphia—the same who has handed on to our present day the ubiquitous Childs' Restaurants of the American continent.

A NEW ORGANISM: "BELLY AND CRANIUM"; HOTEL-THEATRE IDEA; 40TH ST.
—"FARTHEST NORTH"; GEORGE W. CHILDS, CAPITALIST

The following was MacKaye's proposal. Recognising, from personal knowledge, the baneful, hampering influence of theatrical speculation upon the development of the theatre's art, he had devised a scheme intended hopefully to moderate or abolish it entirely, by means of a self-subsidising plan, combining in one structure two wholly different sources of economic income. He would build, in short, a *hotel-theatre*.

The idea, very probably, may have grown in his mind out of his experience in building the Madison Square. When he first started to renovate that, as the little Fifth Avenue Hall, it had been merely a petty adjunct of the greater Fifth Avenue Hotel, which practi-

* In Chapter XV, together with photo of a letter from Oscar Wilde.

cally included it. Being a personal friend both of Eno, the chief owner, and of Charles Griswold, a part-proprietor of that hotel, he knew that the hotel-man's business viewpoint considered the theatre-hall in the light merely of a small side-speculation, tributary to the hotel. Cherishing, however, very different valuations of his own concerning the related functions of the hotel business and dramatic art, he had in mind to reverse that policy, in this wise:

He would devise a single economic organism, of twin function, wherein, so to speak, a hotel should be the supply-belly, and a theatre the dispensing cranium, in a healthful corporeal harmony. To this end, each should be resourcefully and distinctively equipped, with all the devices of invention. Not the belly, however, but the cranium would ordain the governing policy. Thus, as junior partner, an amply furnished *Falstaff* would play "chief cook and bottle-washer" to the determinate tastes of *Hamlet* and *Rosalind*, joint master and mistress of the inn, wherein, the public, as paying guests, would render tribute to all parties. In more fiscal parlance: *Hotel profits would be used to reimburse box-office deficits, and theatre-profits to create a stage-endowment fund.* In brief, the hotel would be run *for the sake* of subsidising the theatre. This project, of course, called for a non-profit-sharing philanthropist to back it—on analogous principle of the (much later built) Metropolitan Opera House—and in 1881 such a capitalist appeared to have been found in the person of George W. Childs, heading a small group of other "wealthy gentlemen," similarly minded.* Curiously enough, the New York site which my father then chose, and tried (though unsuccessfully) to negotiate for this hotel-theatre, was located on the east side of Broadway, between 38th and 39th streets—directly opposite the 1927 site of the Metropolitan Opera House. In those days, that unprecedented location was termed "daring and foolhardy," for among all theatres of other New York managers, the one then "farthest north" was that of Lester Wallack, who—to derisive public comment—was just preparing to move his own régime from 13th to 30th Street.

WM. GILLETTE CALLS MACKAYE—"INDESCRIBABLE GENIUS AND SUPER-FRIEND"

I have no data as to why my father's project then fell through: perhaps because he was unable to obtain the desired site; perhaps because his philanthropists deemed it too daring. What-

* Cf. Steele MacKaye's own statement on page i, 423.

ever the reason, owing to the non-fruit of his plans, the shadows of his own keen disappointment are evident in records of this chapter; but the new theatre project itself, in varying forms, moved forward to a different fulfilment, achieved by his unswerving will.

Closing his *Won at Last* tour, at Chicago, in early June, MacKaye returned East, shortly after the *Hazel Kirke* long run at the Madison Square had been "hushed," on May 30th. On June 1st, William Gillette's farce-comedy, *The Professor*, had its first New York night there, with a full house and a cordial reception. "Don't forget, however," wrote a wag journalist, digging the ribs of the jubilant Mallorys, "*that one good night does not make a Hazel Kirke!*" None the less, *The Professor*, under continuing policies of the theatre's founder, prospered well at the Madison Square. Forty-three years later, its author wrote to Steele MacKaye's son.*

"Dear Percy MacKaye: I am entirely helpless when it comes to expressing my opinion and feeling of and about your father. *He was a marvelous and indescribable genius, for one thing, and a super-friend (when he was a friend) for another.* My admiration for him was great. If his extraordinary personality can be described by those who are expert in that line of effort, I would very much like to see what they make of it.—*William Gillette.*"

From one who was, in days of the Madison Square Theatre, as director, playwright and actor, a competing rival of my father, stepping into his place at a tragic crisis, this gracious note of reminiscence is at once a tribute to my father's gift of "super-friendship," and to the magnanimous nature of the gifted writer himself. It is here a privilege to record it, in the history of American artists of the theatre, among whom these two are permanently eminent representatives.

BRATTLEBORO—THE "ISLAND KINGDOM"; BROOK WATER-WHEELS
AND THE MERLIN OF BOYHOOD

At this juncture, it is pleasant also to record a little oasis in my father's "midland wanderings." Back from his strenuous touring on a brief summer vacation, he rejoined his family, in the pristine loveliness of old New England, at Brattleboro, Vt. Here, once more he revelled in those unspoiled surroundings of wild mountains and farming uplands, where six years before he had written a play † in the small cottage, now remembered as Rudyard Kipling's studio.

* Other portions of this letter (Dec. 2, 1924) are quoted on page i, 373.

† Cf. page i, 240.

Early in April, his wife and younger children, with "Aunt Sadie" had gone there to board at Wilder's Farm. After the long grimy journey from New York, in the little freight-coupler cars, where at each door-platform the smoky-faced brakeman revolved the wheel of a shrieking handbrake for rattling stoppage at way-stations—then, after the long brisk twilight drive from the railroad, behind sweating horses, to the farmhouse porch, where a late stormbank of snow still barred a northern door—how strangely vivid, in remembrance, is that weary ecstasy with which I tumbled out from the wagon, a six-year-old, released at last from city prison—at last in "the real country!"

Then, indoors—the groping dimness—the ineffable, musky-sweet smell of old timber—the tall, straight, old maid, Miss Wilder—the table, in candlelight, circled with bowls—full bowls of lucent maple-syrup—supper—the steep, creaking stairway—the deep bed, a cloud-bank of goose-feathers—and dreamless slumber.

Dawn, then—April 8th—my brother Jamie's ninth birthday—wildly quick dressing together—downstairs—the spotless kitchen—the gorging on doughnuts, crunchy with deep-amber shells and tang like ripe butternuts! So outdoors—to the barn, the dim smell of hay, the two Wilder brothers, old bachelors, close-shaven and long-white-bearded—the yoked oxen, corn cribs, the brook, the flashing trout—discovery: a little green island—the brown foam rushing—the wild leap—the unconquerable kingdom of childhood!

Of that little island kingdom my father himself was acclaimed king, on those fleeting days of his vacation: clan chief, without peer, with a triple vassalage of feudal lords—my brother Jamie and I and our brown-studied older brother, Will, who arrived with my father from the far metropolis, clad—though not yet in his first teens—in his first long trousers!

Will was our prince of the cloud-capped towers, the myth-compeller, minstrel of dragons and heroes, our Don Quixote of dream-wind-mills. Jamie was a dancing imp, tree-climbing, rock-leaping, golden-curved. I was a small black hornet of energy, ubiquitous, buzzing in honey-hives and mud-banks. All three were quick moulds for the stuff of enchantment—and Father was Merlin, our enchanter. In us he created dramatic forms of magic, and himself became them all at will, in a repertory of plastic moods—gay, solemn, mischievous, grandiose. Momentarily, he imbued us, his children, with that astonishing fluid of magnetism, with which he swayed the associates of his larger world, in art, business and

social fellowship, by investing them with the quickening spell of his own radiant personality, compelling from all within its orbit a kindred responsiveness.

That summer at Brattleboro, in the running brook, he built us dams of turf and rocks, wading in the roiled current while we aided him like a bevy of beavers. So, for our island kingdom he created practical reservoirs, to serve as fisheries and sailing waters for enchanted ships, whose tiny masts and booms and sheets, that bellied in the breeze, he taught us to construct with minute and workable symmetry. In this miniature industry, master and apprentices worked in joint partnership, with the zest of delighted demi-gods. And there, for the verges of our splash-dams, we built wooden water-wheels, neatly carpentered of various sizes, and poised them in crotches of stout stanchions, cherry boughs and willow, chosen and cut for their smooth barks. No turbines of steel, harnessed to Niagara, ever generated a power more electrifying than those paddles of wood, splashing in Wilder Brook, quickened in the hearts of Steele MacKaye's sons, boy-captained by their father in his rôle of civil engineer.

If here, in printed words, I might only conjure again to palpitant life that exhilarant super-boy in his imaginative captaincy, shaking the brook-foam from his black curls, concentrating the militant ardour of an Achilles in shouts of his play-laughter—if here, indeed once more, that embodiment of timeless charm might move and breathe for one quintessential moment—then here there would hardly be need to sketch his epic-portrait with horizon-lines of his long record. For here, in that flash, the reader would behold the boy-man of this memoir, armoured with his undismayable relish of life, as he lived and died. But I cannot conjure so. In these pages I can only hope to hint of that sentient being whom his fellow artist, Gillette, has described as “indescribable.”

CITY-LONESOMENESS; RAISING MONEY; A. W. TOURGEE

On his return from the magic balsam of Vermont hills to “tormenting anxiety and endeavour” in the shut-up, empty house in 44th Street, New York, it was stifling midsummer. From there he wrote back (August 14th) to my mother:

“Dear Wife—how dear you will never know! I am back here in the sweltering city, and realise how utterly barren and worthless my life is without you. I have spent a week of unutterable homesickness. The only real compensation I have for my weary days and nights of

tormenting anxiety and endeavour—I find in your presence and in the consciousness of your steadfast love. Oh! the agony of my longing to be with you and our precious children no words can possibly express. Will we ever be at peace together again? . . . Mr. Tourgee says he is going to try *himself* now to raise some money, but that will take from two to three weeks. I shall live in the strictest economy. I gave Hal the money for his shoes. I offered Marie * a couple of dollars, but she would not take it. I shall try to get off to Norton to-morrow night. Au revoir—soul and inspiration of all that is good in me!—Your J. S. M.”

In this letter, “Mr. Tourgee” refers to Judge Albion W. Tourgee of Philadelphia,† editor of the illustrated weekly, *The Continent*. His novel, *A Fool’s Errand*, dealing with Civil War reconstruction days in the South, had in the early ’Eighties an enormous circulation.

My father had first met Judge Tourgee at the Union League Club, New York, early in February, ’81, while Tourgee was on a lecture tour. Their meeting soon afterwards led to MacKaye’s undertaking the dramatisation of *A Fool’s Errand*. July, August and September were filled with preparations for an autumn tour, for which my father organised a company, with the letter-head:

“STEELE MACKAYE COMPANY. *Steele MacKaye*, Manager; *Theo. Morris*, Business Manager, No. 107 West 44th Street, New York. REPERTORY: “WON AT LAST”—“HAZEL KIRKE”—“A FOOL’S ERRAND.”

The business manager, Morris, soon proved incapable, and my father’s old friend, William E. Payson, took his place, in a staunch devotion which on tour outweathered dire lack of funds for salary.

NORTON: BEGINNING *A FOOL’S ERRAND* AND “ANOTHER PLAY”

On August 15th, having closed the rented New York house, my father went to Payson’s home in Norton, Mass., where on arrival he wrote to my mother at Wilder Hill, Brattleboro, referring to “another play,” of which I do not know the identity:

* *Marie* here refers to his French sister-in-law, who had acted in his first production, *Monaldi*. Some years after the death of her husband (my mother’s brother, James Medbery), she had married Medbery’s devoted friend, William E. Payson, of Norton, Mass.

† Judge Tourgee’s residence in Philadelphia was “Thorheim”; his summer home was in Mayville, N. Y. From there, July 29th, he wrote to my father in New York: “My return trip was pleasant. Regarding our project, I hardly think I can do more than \$2000, and not that, unless I can find it.”

"Will Payson is still away in Chicago. . . . I have not yet received material for first act of *A Fool's Errand* from Mr. Tourgee, which is very discouraging. Meantime, I am making very slow progress on my other play.—My heart is burst with blessings for that precious crowd upon the Wilder Hill."

Soon afterwards he hastened to Mayville, N. Y., to confer with Tourgee, and from there back to New York, where he received (Sept. 11) this note from Tourgee, after their conference:

"I send you herewith material which defines the position of Southern young men upon the Ku Klux question. It *must* come in somewhere as its elements are *indispensable* to the success of the play. . . . In the Fourth Act, the death of old *Jerry* should be retained without fail. It gives the tragic effect without fear of any cry of 'blood and thunder.' He is not *killed* by the K. K., but dies a natural death in their hands. His 'spells'—epileptic in character—have prepared the way for this very kind of death. . . . Please send me at once your *second act*. I am impressed you had better save its elements closely. . . . In the third, having named the glen 'the Stack Rocks,' why not take an idea from that? The Stack Rocks in N. C. are a group of big, high rounded rocks, so named from their resemblance to a haystack. They make a very striking scene."

SEPTEMBER REHEARSING; "THE FIGHT HAS BEGUN"; AN
ILL-STARRED BEGINNING

Early in September, '81, the wonder-days of the MacKaye boys in Brattleboro came to their close and our family went to stay for eight months with the Paysons, at their home in the country village of Norton, Mass. There my mother received these two notes from my father, in New York:

"(Sept. 22nd): Dear Molly—I'm driven day and night rehearsing. . . . Prospects good. . . . Rochester next week during the fair. . . . 75 per cent. of gross receipts there.—*The fight with the Mallorys has begun* and, unless Bangs is either a fool or a knave, I shall win. Don't worry!"

"(Sunday, Sept. 25th): My precious wife—*To-morrow we start off upon what I pray God may not prove 'A Fool's Errand!'* I have had a terribly wearing week of rehearsals, and developed a sore throat that destroys the little sleep I get. . . . *The time has come for Mr. Bangs to fight in earnest now. The new play is my great hope.*—Let me hear all about my beloved children and their mother. Embrace and bless them all for their heart-hungry father. Don't let baby Hazel altogether forget me. Percy might print me a message, perhaps—God bless him!"

So, in renewing his bitter fight to regain lost rights and meet accumulated debts, my father left all he held most dear, and started off on his new play's errand—allegorically named!—which (after some skirmishes in the East) was to carry him, barnstorming, beyond the Mississippi, before his homecoming. But the beginning of this "fight in earnest" with the Mallorys was darkly ill-timed and ill-starred with strange deaths, imminent and actual. At that moment, not only was F. N. Bangs, the distinguished lawyer of his *Hazel Kirke* case entering on a last sickness of mental decay, but his new enterprise was involved, at its start, in the gloomy ending of a national assassination.

As a child, I remember the strangeness of an autumn morning in that little town of our refuge, as I heard, for the first time, the steady tolling of a church bell, and watched—through slow falling red-and-yellow leaves—the form of a newsboy, rushing along the village road, calling, with harsh, rhythmic cry: "*Garfield is dead! . . . Garfield is dead! . . .*"

"GARFIELD IS DEAD!"—INJUNCTION OF HAZEL KIRKE; WON AT LAST
SUBSTITUTED; "RAIN AND RIP AGAINST US"

On the very autumn day of the American President's funeral, my father started on his wild-goose tour, which opened in Auburn, N. Y. On the day before (Sunday, Sept. 25th), from Erie, Pa., the author of *A Fool's Errand* wrote to MacKaye:

"Stopping here for the sake of getting a convenient train to the President's funeral, I have completed my revision of the first act and send it herewith. The changes, mostly verbal, I have written in to your copy.—Send on what you have done at once. I shall be at Mayville on Tuesday. Yours—A. W. TOURGEE."

Also, on that black Monday, the attorneys for the Mallorys (Scudder and Carter, New York) served on my father an injunction * preventing him from opening his campaign with his play

* In the Auburn papers of Tuesday (Sept. 28th) appeared the following announcement, by the manager of the local Academy of Music:

"SPECIAL CARD. In Justice to Mr. STEELE MACKAYE and the public of Auburn, Mr. E. J. Matson is obliged to announce that, just before leaving New York—for this city, Mr. MacKaye was enjoined from playing his drama of HAZEL KIRKE here. This action against him was taken too late to enable him to dissolve the injunction in time to produce the play as advertised. In order, therefore, not to disappoint the public of Auburn, Mr. MacKaye has consented to appear as JOHN FLEMING in his great Comedy Drama of WON AT LAST! A play having all the purity of tone and intense dramatic interest of *Hazel Kirke*, with much more of fun and humor—a later product of his pen, and one of the greatest successes ever produced at Wallack's Theatre."

Hazel Kirke, as he had planned—thus spiking his strongest gun. To deepen the opening gloom, in down-pouring rain, his “leading man,” Dominick Murray, taken suddenly ill, was unable to act; while last hour news was brought that the competing attraction in town was *Rip van Winkle*, with the invincibly popular Joe Jefferson.

So shone the baleful stars on the first night of the battle-tour. But, as we have seen before, in this story of an instrument strangely tuned, though in Steele MacKaye’s nature the strings of his minor *Andante* could respond with *Raven* gloom to chords of a “lost Lenore,” yet his major *Allegro* could as vividly put to rout the twilight melancholy of Edgar Poe with the unquenchable noonday optimism of *Colonel Sellars*. So, the next morning from the Osborne House, Auburn, he wrote to my mother:

“Everything has been against us here—but *we have done much better than I expected*. Rain—Joe Jefferson in *Rip*—the President’s funeral—*Hazel Kirke* changed suddenly to *Won at Last*—all this led us to look for less than \$100, for the night. But we took in nearly \$170, and I never played to a finer audience—in quality. . . . We have Jefferson against us in Rochester again, but—with good weather—we may make expenses. We are just hurrying off to catch the train.—Kisses to the dear children!”

As he caught the Rochester train, he may have bought the morning *Auburnian* and read this item:

“Some people, last night, were disappointed that *Won at Last* would be substituted for *Hazel Kirke*, but there was no disappointment when the play was over. The substituted drama proved to be one of intense and sustained interest and, presented by Mr. MacKaye’s superb company, made one of the finest dramatic performances ever put on the American stage.”

ROCHESTER; MACKAYE’S CASE: “OF \$200,000 FROM HAZEL KIRKE—
NOT ONE CENT”

At Rochester, he stayed at 134 S. Fitzhugh Street, with his first cousins, Millicent and Kenneth Alling, who still there in 1926, tell yet of his whirlwind eagerness, during this strenuous Wednesday-till-Sunday visit, while he was rehearsing his company in the half-completed *Fool’s Errand*, between his performances in *Won at Last*. In a Rochester interview (Sept. 29, ’81), he stated:

“In my legal fight with the Mallory Brothers, by direct advice of my lawyer, Mr. F. N. Bangs, counsel of Governor Tilden, I made arrangements to produce *Hazel Kirke* myself in the large towns of the United

States and Canada.—I gave the Messrs. Mallory ample time to enjoin me from making contracts with managers, which they knew well I was doing, from my advertisements. . . . All summer long, I advertised that I was filling time for *Hazel Kirke* throughout the country, but they took no action against me till the last moment before my departure from New York. Then they obtained a temporary injunction, restraining me from playing the play till the 7th of October, when the case is to be argued before the court, and the matter of a permanent injunction settled. . . . In my own mind, I have not the slightest doubt * of being able, very shortly, to place permanent injunctions upon the Mallorys, restraining them from producing my play, for which—though it has already made nearly \$200,000 for these pious managers—I have not received one cent.”

INCREASING ILLS; “GOD SPEED THE PLAY THAT IS TO SAVE US ALL!”

After Rochester, while on tour,† from Troy, N. Y. (Sunday, Oct. 12th), he wrote to my mother:

“I started last night, at 2 o’clock, to go to Norton—to write the 4th act, and to see you all, but at the last moment decided I could not afford the expense. Up to the end of 3rd act, I think everything remarkably good, but this last act is troubling me very much. However, I shall ‘do my best and leave the rest,’ as your dear mother used to say. Our business here is awful—losing from 150 to 175 dollars a day. In our business department, we have been shamefully neglected again. Ability with fidelity appears impossible to find. If *you* could be shielded, it would matter little.

“Ah! for just a taste of relief from tortures of the money question, which some ungodly rogues have so much of in this life! Well, no matter. Thank God you are secure at Norton, where expenses can be kept down and I can think of you all, gathered together in the dear little home there. . . . Now, my darling, the struggle grows harder every day, and if you hear from me little, it will not be because my whole heart and soul are not with you and our adorable children. If there is a God who responds to the prayer of hard work, then He will soon enable me to bless you with peace of mind. With unutterable longing and love for you and our bairns, always your husband.—J. S. M.”

To this, my mother answered, from Norton: “It is a lovely autumn day—clear, cool and bright. I hope its crisp air will so inspire you that your last words shall be better than your first, *in the play that is to save us all*. God speed it! And how is the 4th act? Has it come

* Soon, however, he was to be disillusionised; for his own lawyer, Bangs, who had forbidden his client to offer or consider any compromise, now (in mental breakdown), when called on by the Judge to argue his case, walked out of the courtroom, wholly deserting the guns. Previously, Bangs had refused all conference with MacKaye and his father, thus losing the experienced judgment of Col. McKaye, soon afterward obliged to set sail for Paris.

† On tour, *Won at Last* played (Oct. 10-16) Saratoga, N. Y., Troy (3 nights), Orange and Newark, N. J.; (Oct. 17-22), Brooklyn, Park Theatre.

to you yet? . . . If you see Bangs, try to tell him to compromise,* if possible. It is your only hope. . . . The boys will write you to-morrow. To-day they are busy, getting in the vegetables. We are all well. . . . Every moment of my life is a thought of you, every breath a prayer."

A THEATRICAL WHIRLWIND: BRINDSLEY SHERIDAN OUTBLOWN

Richard Brindsley Sheridan—composing the last act of his *School for Scandal*, rushing it to the stage, sheet by sheet, with ink still wet, to the actors waiting to rehearse it—has handed down a classic example of last minute inspiration, on the part of a working dramatist.

In literary results, there is, of course, no comparison between *A School for Scandal* and *A Fool's Errand*. But Sheridan, in this hectic instance, was at least working in the single capacity of dramatist—not in the combined functions of dramatist, director, manager, touring agent, advertiser, insolvent capitalist and leading actor, in which multiple capacity Steele MacKaye achieved of its kind another classic example—as a theatrical whirlwind. This, outblowing even Sheridan's gale, concerns the first production of *A Fool's Errand*, at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, Oct. 26, 1881—and is here chronicled in the following letter, from my father to my mother, two days after the opening:

"MY DEAR WIFE—I have not written because until now I have not had one moment. I have rehearsed from 9 in the morning until nearly 3 at night—stopping only for meals. Morris, my business manager, proved a total failure, so—while I was rehearsing the first three acts of the new play and acting at night—I had to attend to the business department also. Last week I had 9 performances besides the rehearsals. At the last moment, my leading actor ran away in a most cowardly manner. Then I had to find another—and rehearse him all over again. *Meantime the fourth act was not yet written*—last Sunday was the only chance I got at it.

"*I began in the morning*, at Brooklyn—came on to Philadelphia in the afternoon—and, after doing a great deal of business connected with the play's management in the front of the house, *I sat down at midnight and by five o'clock the next morning finished the play*. I then routed O'Brien † out of bed, got him to putting it through the typewriter—and went to work myself condensing the other three acts. *I did not take off my clothes at all—but was at rehearsal at nine in the morning—and rehearsed all day and night*—having postponed our first performance until Wednesday night.

* Cf. footnote on page i, 420.

† MacKaye's secretary and dresser. The italics in this letter are emphases of the biographer.

"Monday morning, when I arrived at the theatre for rehearsal, I received a telegram from Graham curtly refusing at the last moment to play *Bill Sanders*.—*Here I was—with the 4th act entirely unrehearsed—and two of the most important parts not cast.* You may imagine how I felt. However *there was nothing to do but win, with the energy of the Devil himself.* I filled the two parts, and crowded into 3 days the work of 3 weeks. *Our first performance would have done credit to any theatre in New York, and was received with great enthusiasm by the audience.* Yesterday I was busy all day with *cutting and rehearsing* the play again. I must now rush away to continue this work. . . . Your J. S. M."

"EMERSON SAYS," ETC.; A FOOL'S ERRAND OPENS: "MUCH HUMOUR AND STRONG SITUATION"—BUT EXCESS OF DIALOGUE

Piquantly timed, as he "rushed away" for more "cutting and rehearsing," the Continental Hotel clerk handed him this little note of philosophy and affection, written from New York (the evening before)—under the gold letter-head "H" surmounted by a baronial crown—penned in the careful script of his sedate sister, Emily (Baroness Christian von Hesse)—the same whom he, as a boy, used to transfix with terror, by poising himself on one tiptoed foot above the verge of Niagara:

"Dearest Brother—*Emerson says: 'If you want to be loved, love measure.'* . . . Christian went out early, this morning, to buy a copy of the Herald, which says your play is much too long. . . . *So remember Emerson!* Proportion, just proportion: I think, dear, you haven't that yet quite at your command. . . . Christian and I feel such an intense interest, that we beseech you to *shorten the play.* The shorter it is, the *longer* it will run.—With truest love, your sister—EMMIE."

Sandwiched between such hectic contrasts behind the scenes, MacKaye had intermortised a sumptuous half-hour interview with the Sunday Press of Philadelphia (Oct. 25th) on the eve of the production—once more revealing the cheesecloth-ermine texture of his *comédie humaine*, under these headlines:

"CONCERNING MACKAYE'S PROPOSED \$1,000,000 THEATRE

A Place of Amusement Where Actors Will Share Profits

"In a luxuriously furnished room in The Continental Hotel, adorned with quaint Japanese hangings, elegant engravings and curiosities of the æsthetic connoisseur, sat Steele MacKaye, the young, robust, successful dramatic author, founder of the Madison Square Theatre, New York, where his *Hazel Kirke* has been running continuously for two years past. . . . 'Is there any truth, Mr. MacKaye, in the report that

you intend to establish another theatre in New York, and possibly in Philadelphia?’

“‘At the present time,’ replied the artist, ‘negotiations are pending for the establishment of *two* theatres in New York City. The first one will be called *MacKaye’s Theatre*, and will be conducted entirely after my own ideas. In this I shall bring out a number of mechanical inventions, of which I am now completing the models, to obtain patents. —*The theatre will be erected by a stock company, with \$1,000,000 capital, and the interested parties are now engaged in selecting the most available site for the building. The money is furnished by capitalists who have no desire merely to make money, but who desire to refine and elevate the stage.*

“‘The first thing artistically to consider is the acting company. . . . After the first year, five of its most capable members will be made associates. . . . Every year, a certain proportion of the profits from the theatre itself, or from companies sent out, will be divided among the original associates. Another annual proportion will be set aside, as an *actor’s fund*, to care for ill or disabled associate members, and to provide pensions for them after ten years. . . . A third remaining proportion will be divided among those financially interested in the success of the theatre. . . . Before any division of profits, however, a fixed proportion will be paid to the dramatic authors whose plays are produced. . . . If *MacKaye’s Theatre* in New York is successful, I shall certainly establish another, in Boston, and probably one in Philadelphia, all of which will be operated on the same principle.”

A critical notice of *A Fool’s Errand* in the Philadelphia North American (Oct. 27th) stated:

“That a very large audience remained at the Arch Street Theatre till almost twelve o’clock last night is evidence of more than ordinary attraction in the play which presents one of the most popular books of the present day—a work whose sale is numbered by hundreds of thousands. . . . In concentrating Judge Tourgee’s long novel into a few, strong situations, Mr. MacKaye has not so tampered with his model as to destroy its identity; and it is gratifying, for once, to see on the stage Southern people, who are possessed of about the same faults and virtues as the rest of the world and no more, and to witness at the same time the usual Northern contrast, without the accompaniment of suspenders and catarrh. . . . In the dialogue there is a great deal of humour, and much that is earnest, characteristically phrased; yet before the close, there is an appalling sense of surfeit. This doubtless will find remedy, by cutting out a large portion of the Ku Klux and “nigger” business. . . . If the piece fails of public support, it will certainly not be for lack of good acting. Mr. MacKaye himself, as *John Burleson*, played with excellent taste. As *Uncle Jerry*, the crippled old negro, Mr. F. F. Mackay’s impersonation was almost perfect, in conception and execution.”

"THE BATTLE OF PHILADELPHIA"; BROOKLYN—"MACKAYE
VERSUS MACKAYE"

Nearly all the notices were very favourable. Meantime, from afar, many tense onlookers were watching this "battle of Philadelphia," in MacKaye's fierce fight for financial resources to carry on his celebrated legal case, which was now growing hot in the courts. In this fight MacKaye was strangely pitted against himself; for the moneyed earnings of his own creative imagination in *Hazel Kirke* were constantly augmenting the resources of his opponents, to continue the fight against him with every expert trick of postponement devised by highly paid lawyers; whereas his own penniless condition * prevented his being able to rally any commensurate counterforces, while his own distinguished attorney was sinking into the fatal decline which soon ended his life. Some phases of this situation, at the moment, are thus set forth by a wrathful commentator (Chicago Tribune, Oct. 30):

"Many will feel heartily rejoiced at the success of Steele MacKaye's last venture. The material in the novel, *A Fool's Errand*, was anything but dramatic, and it is a great triumph that the author-actor has made a go of it in Philadelphia. Last week, in Brooklyn, he stood up under more canvas in a stiffer breeze than any theatrical craft ever weathered.

"It is truly a case of *MacKaye* versus *MacKaye*! Playing there every night at the Park Theatre, in his *Won at Last*, doing only moderate business, while his other play, *Hazel Kirke*, at the opposite house, was taking in \$7,000 in five performances, not one dollar of which does he get—tormented by defaulting members of his company, deserting within three days of his new play's production—not one man in ten thousand could endure as patiently the fate he has met. He has six splendid boys, of remarkable intellect and ability. To educate and provide for them alone, he requires a fortune; and here he is forced to see a speculating minister coin enormous money in a theatre of his invention, with a play of his writing, while he—the potent wizard of a stranger's fortune—is impotent to provide his own, all because—in a poverty-pressed moment—he signed a copper-buttoned contract with long-headed ecclesiastics! . . . It is high time a law was devised for the protection of inventors, writers, and other weak-minded creatures, or a fence built around them to keep off such sharks!"

Further phases of his growing crisis are revealed in the following excerpts of correspondence between my father (on the road) and my mother (at Norton):

* On Oct. 28th, my mother wrote from Norton to my father: "Frank Carpenter writes me that the Mallory case comes up to-day. I pray heaven it will not again be postponed. *I am at my wit's end here for a penny.*"

WORDS BEHIND THE BATTLE: "UNCONQUERABLE"—"PENNILESS"

J. S. M. to M. M. M., Philadelphia, Oct. 29, '81:—"The play is a genuine success—judged by its effect on the audience. Since I have cut out the political verbiage of Judge Tourgee, and brought it down to my own dramatic action, I have obtained laughter—applause—silence—tears, precisely where I calculated upon doing so. . . . The money success is, of course, very moderate. I have a long, hard fight before me to keep afloat. Judge Tourgee has come to the end of his available funds, and I must now go to New York and see what I can do.

"It is not probable you will see me again for a very long time. We must both be patient, industrious and plucky. Before very long we must win. Bangs appears at last to have got to work, and we may hope for results of some kind soon. . . . God bless you for your dear letters—the only taste of sweetness in my fatiguing, worried life. Trust me to be absolutely unconquerable, as long as I have life and health."

M. M. to J. S. M., Nov. 1 and 2: '*Trust me to be absolutely unconquerable, as long as I have life and health.*'—'*I learn every day how to bear anything that may come, with a more determined quietness of spirit.*' These words of yours have I hid in my heart. I would write them in letters of gold on tablets of silver—so dear are they to me, so full of strength and courage. . . . I trust you, dear one—in all things. My heart aches with yours; I know every pang in your life; for love has made me clairvoyant.—How you endure and bear is to me a miracle; but heroism with patience always win; so I possess my soul in patience.

"But, dear, a little money we *must* have, or our children will soon want for food. We are suffering at this moment. *I am penniless.* Marie, too, has nothing and cannot help. The milk bill *must* be paid. If help does not come in a day or two, the milk will stop, and little Hazel will be crying.—Put even twenty-five cents in a letter. I could buy stamps, and twenty cents will buy fish enough for the boys' dinner. *One dollar bill would seem a small fortune.* . . .

"THE DARKEST HOUR"—"DEAR AUNT SADIE!"

"This is the darkest hour of all. With the greatest rigour, I shall cut off everything but bare necessities. Now that I am in such dire need, dear Aunt Sadie refuses to leave me, though she might be in affluence with her rich brother. Pray God we can ever repay her a little for all her devotion! . . . The boys will share all cheerfully, I am sure. They are good and loving children. They have the chickenpox now; but I keep them warm, and they will be all right. That is trifling.

The hardest thing is dear Hal's distress about his school bill. He *must* continue his school—somehow. . . . Do let me hear from you. Suspense is worse than the worst tidings."

"LAST MONEY"—"KEEP HAL AT SCHOOL"—"THE MALLORYS *MUST* SETTLE"

J. S. M. to M. M., Nov. 2, 3, 4, Philadelphia:—"Your letter just here. I hasten to send you the last money I have in bank—this \$20.

Hal must keep at school, and must have his overcoat, if I have to go begging. I will get you more money to-morrow—I don't know how. . . . Useless to try to describe what I am going through.—Most awful weather. All the powers of earth, nature and man seem to combine.—I am too tired.—But I can't afford a breakdown—till after the battle is fought out—and *won*.

(Nov. 2) "I enclose you money order for \$30. You little imagine what it has cost to get this. I am still hard at work perfecting *A Fool's Errand*, and believe I can make it a great success yet. I shall never give up till the breath is ready to leave my body forever.

(Nov. 4) "The situation is desperate. For seven consecutive performances we have played here in the pouring rain. Our share for the two weeks will not be over \$400; the loss is over \$2,000. Next week, in St. Louis, we play upon a good certainty. *All we make there, however, is already bound over* to meet losses here. I must fight on—hoping every hour that the Mallorys will be driven to a settlement; for I am not going to throw away what I have won by years of hard work, without the fiercest kind of a fight first. . . . Beloved Aunt Sadie!—how can I thank and bless her for her sublime devotion to us and our children? If the God she believes in does really exist, He will reward her—only the *Almighty* could. . . . I shall strain every nerve to send you 25 or 30 dollars next week. Meantime, keep up a stout heart, knowing that your husband reveres and adores you more and more, as circumstances reveal your brave, womanly soul—And the children—God bless them all! If misfortune has done nothing else for me, it has enriched my spiritual life with the deepening love of our devotion.

"RUIN AVERTED"—"DIAMONDS AND JEWELRY"—"TENANTS DESERT"—
"DESOLATE LONELINESS"

"Here in Philadelphia, except for the noblest generosity of Christian von Hesse, I should have been driven into a dreadful failure. The money he has let me have, at terrible sacrifices to himself, has averted the threatening ruin. Dear Emmie brought out all her diamonds and jewelry, and offered them to me, to raise money on. A noble pair!—how noble we should never have known, but for these troubles. So let us not count them troubles at all. . . . With a triumphant wealth of love for you and ours, always—whatever comes—with a strong heart, your devoted husband, J. S. M."

(Nov. 17, the Southern Hotel, St. Louis):—"I shall be in Louisville, Ky.—next Thursday, Friday and Saturday; in Chicago—week of Nov. 28th; back here for week beginning 5th of Dec. We open in New York, Jan. 9th. If I can only reach there without failing to meet my obligations, I think I shall be able to settle up my season without dishonour. . . . Meantime, I have been remodelling *A Fool's Errand*, photographing the company both in that play and *Won at Last*, as well as getting up new circulars, letters, etc.; in short, doing what Morris should have done long ago—work up the business department.

"Reaction from the terrible strain of the weeks preceding the first night of *A Fool's Errand*, has told upon every organ in my body, and

it takes all my will to fight almost overwhelming depression. . . . From Marie's telegram, I understand that our tenants have deserted our New York house. Of course, at this distance, I am as utterly helpless to solve that as you are. . . . Play and acting have been splendidly received here, with fine business; but all is swallowed up by former deficits. . . . To keep the home-circle unbroken!—As long as I can do that, I will not complain of the bitter fight. But ah! What wouldn't I give now—in my desolate loneliness—for one hour with you and the inspiring presence of my darlings, in the little home at Norton."

"WILL" OF "THE LITTLE HOME"—HIS PERVASIVE SPIRIT

To the transplanted "little home" at Norton, my father—despite these depressions, which he confided to my mother—wrote back inspiring letters to his children. Among his sons, to all of whom he was passionately devoted, the most comradely in kindred gifts, during his brief life, was my brother Will—named for the William Payson, whose home was then ours, during that bleak autumn and winter. Indeed, Will was the clustering-place of fun and affection in our home, wherever it moved, in our strangely nomadic life.

A brooding, poetic, whimsical, loving dreamer and artist; a droll humourist; a boy maturely philosophic; in his athletic beauty, a young Greek; in the wild grotesques of his drawings, a grim Norse, yet absent-mindedly selfless as a young St. Francis—Will, though instinctively an altruist, was also as doughty a poet-pugilist as ever John Keats in his teens. Like Keats, also (whom, with Shelley, he adored) he died in the very young manhood of genius—too poignantly young, at just twenty, to achieve an early fulfilment of his superlative promise, both as poet and artist, which even two or three years more of life would surely and permanently have recorded.

Without Will this memoir would not be itself. For, at twelve years old, Will was already my father's fellow-thinker and boon companion, soon to become his best pupil, a nobly imaginative actor and writer. From now on, in these pages, though space will be too scant to treat of him separately, his enlarging influence grows pervasive throughout my father's life and work, till the end;—and, beyond both their lives, the strongest creative influence in the life of this biographer is still *his*, and will always continue to be. From Norton, in early December of '81, Will wrote to my father, with misspellings of childhood, here unrecorded:

"Dear Papa—Your letter made me exceedingly happy. It filled me with ambition, and if it is in the power of possibles, I will do as you

say. Papa, if nothing happens to prevent it, I am determined to make a name as an actor, that will last till years after I am dead—not only in one country, or one continent, but all over the civilised world among cultured people.—I say it, though I stand no better chance than any other person, but I am *determined*; and you may be certain, dear Papa, that I really think of you and long for your return. . . . Mama reads the *Odyssey* almost every night. I am learning *Richard Third's* speech, when he first comes on.—But let us turn back. . . . My plans for gaining my ambition are to study just as hard as I can at school—which I am doing—till I am about fourteen years old; and then—happiness!—to study, *by myself*, Mythology and History and Æsthetic Gymnastics, reading instructive books, reciting pieces, and exercising my muscles, for about one or two years; then be a 'supe,' with some famous star; then one of his lowest supports; then a little higher; then his chief support—then play the part he was playing—perhaps in *Virginius* or *The Gladiator*. I wish to be with a Shakespearean actor, because I wish to watch the way he acts.

"GET THROUGH ARITHMETIC—FOR I *MUST* BEGIN THE REAL THINGS BY FOURTEEN!"

"Only, of course, I must get through the Arithmetic, Spelling Grammar, Geography, etc. Oh, if I had not been a fool, I might have been acting now; but now I will not waste any time, for I *must* begin the real things, by fourteen! . . . Papa, don't worry about your contract, for it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. It has done you harm, but it has done me great good; for when I grow up—if I do—it has taught me a lesson that I shall never forget. . . . The spring is frozen to-day so hard that Percy and I and Jamie could slide on it. By knocking it with stones, we found it was three inches thick. . . . This afternoon, dear little Hazel, with her red cheeks, was coming toddling along—for she can walk now—when I went to her for a kiss. She dodged me, dear little thing, with an enormous soda-cracker in her hand, her lace bib turned round on her back. She had her mouth full, and gave a roguish smile, fell down, as she dodged me—but unhurt. . . . Oh, Papa, you cannot tell how much good your letters do me!—Always your loving son—*Will*."

The above letter, enclosed in one from my mother, reached my father, at the Southern Hotel, St. Louis, where the last desperate days of his battling tour were drawing to end, in a rout of bitter fatigue, drained resources, and disintegration of his company.

ALONE AT MIDNIGHT, WITH A LITTLE TALISMAN

The satiric symbol of "a fool's errand," was prophetically fulfilled; and there, alone at midnight in his hotel bedchamber, after the theatre's curtain fall, the desperate "fool-artist," momentarily outworn but unbeaten, wrote home a letter to the waiting partner of

his quixotic errands. In that same hour, while he wrote, certain metropolitan churchmen were counting in dreams their box-office returns for the night; and a certain zero storm was drifting a silt of fine snow, through broken panes of a loft-window, in a far-off New England hamlet.

At that moment, the symbol of satire appeared indeed triumphant; yet another symbol, beyond the grasp of satire—floating light as a baby's curl on the dream-wreckage around him—became for him there the talisman of an unspoiled faith: faith in a "resurrection" which would infallibly spring from a little "hazel charm," which he kept in his breast-pocket. This is the letter he wrote there to my mother:

"My own dear wife—Silence, in my condition, proves more love than all the letters I could pen to you. Your sweet letter—with its dear enclosure—came like sunshine into the desolate darkness of my life here. Things grow harder and harder. Business bad, company mutinous, body used up with fatigue. . . . I am resigned to the loss of one more year, and all the terrible setback this means to me. I will bear anything but failure to meet my obligations to my Company. That dishonour, with its lies and slanders, I cannot endure. . . . I wish to God we could take our children to our hearts and all lie down to eternal rest together. I am so unutterably tired. Sleep—ah, that blessed word!—if I could only sleep—but I can't. I am cursed with an unrest, which will only end with the torturing anxieties of my life. . . . With a little money, I could come out of these trials with triumph; as it is, I shall probably be buried beneath them. . . .

"Forgive me, dear, brave heart, that I am as cruel to write you in this way; but there are enough necessary hypocrisies in my life, without my trying to write what I don't feel to you. With a soul full of contempt and disgust, justified by my experience with this Company, I have to show the world the smiling, genial face of a man who has triumphed. . . . All that I write you doubtless seems enigmatic—because you do not know, and I cannot tell you now, all that has been and is going on. If we live to meet again, I'll try to do so. . . . But now—be brave and patient. Turn to your own work, as I do to mine. Let us realise that the present is death to both of us, and wait, as well as we can, for the resurrection—if there is any. Meantime, with all the heart I have left, I am

Your lover—*Steele MacKaye*.

"Hazel's precious little curl rests on my heart as a Talisman—against the Devil and his infernal world!"

CHAPTER XV

BUILDING WITH DREAMS

Oscar Wilde and a New Art Theatre

New York—Mount Vernon, N. Y.

Jan., 1882—Jan., 1883

“WORK AND WAITING”; *DEUS PATERNUS EX MACHINA*

BACK ONCE MORE IN NEW YORK, AT THE FORTY-FOURTH STREET house, which was then partly sub-rented to lodgers, Steele MacKaye wrote to Norton, in early January, '82:

“My more than dear Wife—Since my return East, I have seen nothing and nobody, except on business—lawyers—the members of my Company, etc. *I have placed the Company, thank God*, and am now free to write my plays. . . . I am pressing my law matters and writing a new play. I hope soon to be able to go to Norton and finish my play there. Meantime it is beggary here. Duns confront me on all sides. I don't dare to talk hopefully of anything. I can only work and wait.—In heart and hope yours—*J. S. M.*”

A little later my mother wrote to him: “What you tell me of the Mallory's answer fills me with terror—they are so shrewd, and now so bitter. Heaven, in its mercy—in its pity—grant you justice!”

Meantime, while he worked and waited, his little talisman, “against the Devil and his infernal world,” conjured—not legal justice, but the succour of a loyal affection which had never yet failed in such crises, whenever that “old Scotch drake,” Colonel McKaye, came swimming again into home port from far climes, and smoothed his ruffled plumes on beholding the latest plight of his wild-swan offspring. The Colonel had recently arrived in New York from his home in Paris, and on Feb. 26th and 28th, '82, Steele MacKaye and his wife (at Norton) exchanged the following letters:

J. S. M. to M. M. M.—“I went with Father to Dobbs Ferry and Riverdale. We spent the whole day looking for houses. We found one at Riverdale—simply perfect as a permanent home for our children—on the crest of the hill—three acres of land, overlooking the Hudson—the most inspiring views—all modern improvements—not far from stations—on one side, the H. R. R. R., on the other the Elevated Road continuation, which would enable the boys to go directly to the door of Mr. Fowler's school. . . . Father seemed very much taken with it. He

was to find out the price, and I expect him here every moment to tell me. . . . Of course, it is very foolish to expect that father would buy it as a home for us. But if I can lease it, I think we had better move in immediately. . . . "At Wallack's, *Youth* is a great success, so there is no opening for my play there this season. I am finishing it, however, in the hope of its production, next season, with an advance of money. . . . It now seems likely that Bangs will *really* begin his long-deferred campaign, next Friday. God help him give the Devil his due! . . . Your welcome letter just came, with Percy's precious little note. Hug the boy for me, and tell him what a comfort and delight it is to me—written by his own hand! Dear Will's drawing arrived last night, and I shall treasure it, as I do every effort of my children's faculties. Deepest love to all, including the true-hearted Netty.*

"I open this letter to say that the price of the Riverdale house is \$40,000. The Colonel is going up to see it again. But nothing will come of that. It cannot be rented."

M. M. M. to J. S. M.—"Your dear letter has brought its full measure of joy, as ever. . . . Isn't \$40,000 a very large price? It seems to me a small fortune. I am sure the place must be lovely, but as you say—not to be thought of for us—at present. . . . Pray God Mr. Bangs *will* move on Friday! . . . About *Youth*,† I cannot feel very sorry concerning the delay, for I had a great dread of your having your piece pitchforked on the stage, with inadequate rehearsals. . . . How about *The Jeanette*? ‡ Is that all over? . . . I hope you will be more fortunate on your next house-hunt; for, oh, I do so long for a settled, quiet home. God grant we may soon have it!"

CHESTER HILL, MT. VERNON, N. Y.: A NEW HOMESTEAD FOR NOMADS

The "settled, quiet home" was not bought by Colonel McKaye, as these letters hope between their lines. Instead, the Colonel then rented for our family a charming place—not at Riverdale, but at Mt. Vernon, N. Y., on the corner of Elm Place and Fulton Avenue, Chester Hill.

It was an attractive house with a tower, completely nestled round by old, great vines of wisteria. These were all in rich purple blow of large, pendulous blooms, mingled with odorous honeysuckle—on that wonderful May Day when we first moved in. To this hour, the scents of such blossoms still bring back lovely images of the green terraced gardens there, and the romantic grandeur of a grove

* "Netty"—Anita Angelina Gordon—was our Spanish servant and nurse, a staunch support of our household for seven years, during the desert places of which she served gladly without salary between oases.

† *Youth* was the first modern play produced by Lester Wallack at the third Wallack's Theatre, which he had opened (on the N. E. corner of Broadway and 30th St.), Jan. 4, 1882, with *A School for Scandal*.

‡ Cf. letter of Steele MacKaye to Colonel McKaye, page i, 432.

of oaks and hickories near by, where I ran down with my brothers, that first day, and picked yellow violets and wake-robins, beside a clear spring in the hollow root-cup between twin giant oaks.

So the drear winter of exile at Norton was overpast. The contents of the big 44th Street house—the old paintings, the tall clock, etc.—were unpacked and regathered around us. Once again, with renewing spring and hopes, a new homestead was established, on the outskirts of New York, considerably nearer to the city than the former one at Stamford, Conn.

Chester Hill was then a very new settlement of the little town, Mt. Vernon, comprising chiefly the homes of commuters by railroad to New York. Among the neighbours were Dr. Youmans, editor of *The Popular Science Monthly*, and several other literary people. The surrounding portion of Westchester County was then largely wild country of woods and farms—a region where my father, who loved horses and driving, used to take us for delightful, long drives, on Sundays and holidays, during our three years' sojourn there. As before, when living at Stamford, he had also a studio in New York, for his teaching and professional activities.

The transition in our fortunes—from “cheesecloth,” if not this time to “ermine,” at least to a moderately comfortable “homespun”—had been wrought by this auspicious advent of Colonel McKaye, who—after a flying visit to home shores—had sailed again for France. Addressed to him there, Steele MacKaye wrote, on May 16th, a long letter, detailing some of his working activities, which I have here italicised:

2 NEW PLAYS; 3 PROMOTING COMPANIES; “BUILDING UP MY DRAMATIC SCHOOL”; “SCHEME FOR A NEW \$600,000 THEATRE”

“Sherwood Studio Building, 57th St. and 6th Ave.

“Dear Father: I have been incessantly busy ever since you left—*moving, and getting settled*, in addition to my *work on my models*—teaching, and the endeavour to work my *inventions*. I have advertised in all the dramatic journals, and hope to succeed in *building up my School*. At present, *I am cleaning off the lessons I owe to some of my old pupils*. With the children we are now settled at Mt. Vernon. . . . *I am at work on my American Melodrama—entitled The Jeanette*—I think it a timely subject, and one likely to win a popular success, especially since the latest news from the heroes of the unfortunate expedition.* I hope to make a strong emotional and scenic drama of this, in

* The historic ill-fated expedition, on the ship *Jeanette*, which sought the North Pole. A survivor, named Morse, was a devoted friend of Steele MacKaye at the Lambs Club. Cf. page ii, 214.

time for production early the coming season. *I am also finishing my play for Wallack's Theatre.* These two plays, well done, will form a good summer's work.

"Within the past two weeks, *I have succeeded in interesting some gentlemen in my scheme for a new theatre*—and have been guaranteed the money to carry it out—if I can secure the property at the corner of 33rd St. and Broadway for the building—at a cost of \$600,000. It took me five months to negotiate the lease of the land on which the Madison Square Theatre stands. I suppose it will take me as long to manage this affair. My scheme has been pronounced by level-headed business men—a perfectly sound and practical one, both as a real estate investment and a theatrical undertaking.

"You can understand how busy I am, when you learn that I am thus endeavouring *to write two plays—organise three companies*—(one for my chair—one for my coupler—and one for *MacKaye's Theatre*)—and *build up a Dramatic School.* . . . I hope that, next time you come, your children and grandchildren may be a source of happiness—and not of anxiety to you. If pluck and work can succeed, I and mine will never cause you any botheration again. Our grateful love to you—best and dearest of fathers! With hope and courage—Your son—*J. S. M.*"

As this indicates, ideas for his "new theatre" constantly besieged his mind. Fresh designs, plans, estimates, were being devised, and desirable locations sought.

ILL HEALTH; ELUDING PUPILS TO INVENT A CAR-COUPLER

"Work on my models" refers not only to models of his theatre inventions, but also to his invention of a railroad car-coupler, by which he was then fascinated and, for a while, partly side-tracked from more important work. He regarded this work, however, as important in itself, not merely for money making but in social improvement. In those days the couplers of passenger cars were more primitive than those of freight cars to-day. The consequent discomfort and nervous fatigue of railroad travel he himself had experienced on his long touring journeys. To improve those crude conditions, inventive ingenuity and adequate capital were needed. Enthusiastically, he proposed to supply the first and secure the second. In the former he succeeded, in the latter he failed—an experience common to many pioneering inventions.

With the perfecting of this car-coupler invention and its organising, my father was occupied, at times, during two or three years. Concerning his early work on it, my mother has written:

"While he was giving his private lessons in dramatic expression at our Forty-fourth Street house, he was also greatly absorbed in the

invention of a car-coupler. He had a place in Newark, New Jersey, where he had models made, etc. By this car-coupler he thought he was going to revolutionise railroad travel and make our fortune besides; and, as ever, he was completely absorbed in the work at hand. . . . Now, one pupil was living in our house, yet I could hardly ever get your father to give the lessons, as scheduled—he was so intent on that coupler. Mornings, I would watch, and try to capture him before he went off to Newark, and evenings, after he came home; but usually in vain. With other pupils at the time, it was the same. But ah, me! The car-coupler project came to naught, after much money spent.” *

THE “PASSION FOR PERFECTION”; DRUMSTICKS AND A CHRISTMAS DINNER

This “complete absorption in the work at hand” was characteristic. It was a form of imaginative concentration, needfully advantageous in enabling him to put through Herculean enterprises, but detrimental to many small social amenities which would have oiled their great wheels to run smoothly. It was part of his artist passion for perfection, which is illustrated by a little incident that occurred (at Christmas of this year, ’82), in our Mt. Vernon home.

My father had given me a child’s drum—a large, fine one, and had set about teaching me just how to hold the drumsticks, in order to tap rhythmically a light and rapid roll-call. He himself had learned how, he told me, from a drummer of the Seventh Regiment, in Civil War times. The sticks, however, that came with my drum from the store, were clumsily made and ill balanced. This troubled him; and he immediately hunted up two pieces of seasoned black walnut, took out his jackknife, sat down beside me on the floor, near the coal grate-fire, and began to whittle me two new drumsticks, of a proper shape.

In the midst of this careful work, Christmas dinner was announced. But he was too absorbed to take notice. Many guests and relatives were assembled, ready to file off with the family to the dining-room. Again the announcement; but my father did not hear. He was transported far away, in a heaven of whittling—an artist’s “paradise lost” unsought by all present except himself and

* “Those were terrible times,” my mother’s statement continues: “your father half insane with worry, no money, cares of our great family, our big house, etc. For years he had been subject to severe attacks of nervous exhaustion. After the *Hazel Kirke* disappointment, these grew much worse. Sometimes they were so dreadfully alarming, that people, seeing them for the first time, often thought he was dead. Moreover, he was always very sleepless, so that it was the usual thing for me to rub him, as a masseuse, hours at a time, till—when dawn came—he would sleep. Then Aunt Sadie and I had to keep a whole house full of turbulent boys quiet. Even the babies mustn’t cry before eleven or twelve, noon.”

me, to whom he confided the mysteries of form, balance, finish, and rhythmic line, which his deft fingers were carefully seeking with that sharp knife-blade in the grain of dark wood.

My mother touched his shoulder. He looked up—sighting one half-closed eye along the half-finished drumstick.

"My dear—dinner!—the company!"

"Yes, yes—just a minute. I'll follow you."

A despairing glance from the hostess, as she leads the large Christmas party beyond view. And now "mine host" is alone on the sitting-room floor, with only small "me," beside him, holding one finished drumstick. Silence, then, and rapt whittling. Murmurs and tinkle of dishes from the dining-room. Whittling: only whittling. The job begun must be done—and *rightly* done. And now a boy-delegate (one of my brothers) on tiptoe:

"The turkey—it's ready to carve!"

"Yes, yes—in a minute."

Silence, again: intense, rapturous whittling. Cycles of timeless *perfecting*, till he held in his hand the smooth pair, beautifully turned and matched. Then another boy-delegate, and the awful whisper:

"Papa, it's dessert! You and Percy have lost the turkey!"

"No!—have we, my boy? Never mind! We've saved the drumsticks!"

He sprang up; snatched the toy-drum, as I followed him; and a long, deep, rippling roll-call announced our arrival—at dessert.*

NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW: "SAFETY IN THEATRES": "A NEW MANAGERIAL MOSES"

Besides his other work, during the summer of '82, MacKaye was occupied with two magazine articles; one, for *Werner's Voice Magazine*, regarding Delsarte and expression in art; the other, for *The North American Review*.

"We beg to ask," the Editor of the latter wrote to him (July 12th), "if you will not consent to write for us an article, ten review pages in length, on the subject of 'Safety in Theatres.'"

* Another incident of this kind was told by our Aunt Sadie, who related how she came into the library, one noon, to call my father to lunch, and found him working at his easel—clothed in his dress-suit. On the night before, he had returned home from a late supper-party and, instead of going to bed, had become interested in completing a large drawing, had drawn all night and—having ignored breakfast—was still absorbed in his work at the hour of lunch.

About this time, he drew in pencil a portrait head of me (in profile): an excellent likeness, which I once had framed, in 1902—since then apparently lost.

This invitation he accepted, and his article appeared in the *N. A. Review*, for November, 1882. It concluded with the following "Decalogue" to theatrical managers, which won him, from the amused dramatic columns, the title of "a new managerial Moses":

1. Thou shalt veneer all woodwork with fireproof composition.
2. Thou shalt have automatic trap-doors on the roof above the rigging loft.
3. Thou shalt have an automatic fireproof curtain.
4. Thou shalt have an air-tight tank, with air-condensing pump attachment, holding water enough to extinguish an ordinary fire.
5. Thou shalt keep two fire extinguishers on each floor.
6. Thou shalt keep two axes on each floor.
7. Thou shalt organise a fire company of the employees of the house.
8. Thou shalt have a patent seat capable of turning the auditorium into a series of aisles.
9. Thou shalt allow ten feet of exit room to every two hundred seats on a floor.
10. Thou shalt provide the best known system of ventilation."

Most of these "Ten Commandments" of practical foresight (to-day commonplaces in all public buildings) he had put in practice, for the first time anywhere, at his Madison Square Theatre, and ere long was to institute all of them at his next theatre, the Lyceum. In doing so, he imposed on himself, as manager, a policy which no legal statute had as yet even suggested, and to carry out his policy he made about twenty new mechanical inventions.

The implications of such a practical policy were apparently so utilitarian, the very words "mechanical inventions" carry to-day the connotation of a world régime so increasingly mechanistic, that it is difficult to convey, by mere detail of record, how mystically such practicality was a confluent part of my father's synthetic being, wherein the æsthetic and philosophic interfused with the moral and pragmatic elements, and all were facets of one glowing prism—the Artist.

OSCAR WILDE; "THE DREAM-THEATRE" IN "A LOST CHAPTER"
OF THREE CAREERS

No facts of record, however, could perhaps better suggest this, than that Steele MacKaye was regarded as an inspiring friend and fellow-thinker, not only by such varied personalities as Edison and Inness, Ingersoll and Delsarte, William James and Henry Irving, at various periods of their creative careers, but also by Oscar

Wilde, in the early prime of his æsthetic prestige and public esteem.

In the later "*selva oscura*" of his darkly shining destiny, much has been forgotten, and little recorded, of Oscar Wilde during his first amazing pilgrimage through this western world, on his lecture touring of our Eastern States, in the year 1882. Perhaps because his strange history has been chiefly memorialised by writers of England and Germany, this wander year of his life constitutes a kind of hiatus in his public record as a dramatist. To those almost blank pages of his professional career, some surviving letters of his to Steele MacKaye contribute some significant data, that partly fill in the hiatus with newly discovered facts suggestively relevant to his artistic interests during his stay in America.

As such—interpreted in the light of some other records and recollections—they comprise a brief, lost chapter in the professional careers both of Wilde and MacKaye and of a third brilliant presence of the theatre, soon to be mentioned. Before, however, presenting the letters themselves (never till now published), I will touch upon some of those other data which, taken together, illumine—and are illumined by—the letters. I will also touch upon some similarities and contrasts in traits of leadership on the part of these two artists, in those two kindredly æsthetic movements, related to the theatre's art, which both sponsored, and indicate how their meeting in America almost brought into being a splendid experiment of the theatre, under their joint association as artists.

MARY ANDERSON, GIRL AND WOMAN; A "BRILLIANT PROJECT"
FOR WILDE'S RETURN TO AMERICA

In her recollections and notes for this memoir, before quoted, my mother has written to me:

"When your father came back from Europe in the early Seventies, and was then teaching the art of expression in New York, he was approached, in regard to instructing young Mary Anderson, then a raw girl, by persons who were *very* anxious to have him take her in charge. For some reason, at the time, he was not willing, so she went to some one else; but later on she conferred with him, in reference to some definite theatrical plans which your father then had with Oscar Wilde.

"It was in 1882 that your father saw so much of Oscar Wilde. Mary Anderson then wanted Wilde to write a play for her, in which your father was to collaborate as producer and director; and it was almost done, but Mr. Griffin, her adviser and backer, came in and stopped the idea. During this time, your father saw a great deal of Oscar Wilde at the Lambs Club, and they planned to produce many plays together in connection with a great theatre project, which your

father had long had in mind, and for which Wilde was to return for a second trip to America.

A PLANNED WEEK'S VISIT: "BOOING" A BOYISH "DISCIPLE"

"On one occasion, Wilde was planning to spend a week with us all at Chester Hill, to talk over and start the brilliant project. We made great preparation for his visit, but for some reason (I forget what), at the last moment, he could not arrange to come then.

"Your father, however, was constantly talking of his wonderful conversations with Wilde, of Wilde's striking appearance, æsthetic garb, etc.; so much so, that your brother Will (then a lad not yet fourteen) became boyishly enthused by the æsthetic cult, and in sign of his 'discipleship' resumed his knickerbockers, letting his brown curly hair grow quite long, under his soft green felt cap. As he would walk dreamily along the roadside, reading his beloved Shelley, the schoolboys (for Will didn't go to school then himself) would call after him 'Heigh, Oscar!' and laugh at him, booing; but their jeers never ruffled his serenity. 'You see, mother,' he said, 'what a boon the æsthetic life can be! Wherever I walk out, I scatter broad smiles in my wake.'"

These excerpts of letters to my mother in Mt. Vernon, from my father in New York pertain to this Oscar Wilde theatre scheme:

(The Lambs: Aug. 14, '82): "Everything is on the ragged edge. I hope, wait, work. We expect a decisive meeting to-morrow night. I hope to bring you news heart-gladdening." . . . (Office of Francis M. Pirrson, 1251 B'way., Aug. 15): "I am in the very thickest of the fight *with the elements concerned in the Theatre project*. I may have to go to Saratoga, Long Branch, or Long Beach to-morrow. I cannot tell till our meeting to-night. We have struck a snag, delaying all. We are on the verge of a grand success. Hot endeavours require cooling forbearance. . . ." (Pirrson's: Sept. 6, '82): "If this enterprise succeeds, it means such emancipation, such triumph over rascality, that I often feel such joy unrealisable. . . . A day, or a month, may determine the best or the worst of it. Meantime, don't strain eyes or ears. Don't expect. God bless you all again!"

THE "SUPER-ÆSTHETICAL" SUNFLOWER: WILDE AND MACKAYE
AT THE LAMBS

In 1882, Oscar Wilde was twenty-six years old. He was then in the height of that "super-æsthetical, highly magnetical" first stage of his career, which had just been satirised by W. S. Gilbert in the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, *Patience*, produced at London, in 1881. Wilde's appearance, in his æsthetical garb, which he wore throughout his American visit, is thus described by Robert Harborough Sherard, in his book *The Real Oscar Wilde* *:

* Page 58: T. Warner Laurie, Ltd., London.

"His splendid youth and manly bearing lent a certain charm to the strange costume in which he masqueraded. There was a dignity and graciousness in his manner that blinded one to his eccentric appearance. . . . The long locks of rich brown hair that waved across his forehead and undulated to his shoulders gave his fine head an almost feminine beauty. It might have been the head of a splendid girl, were it not for the muscular throat, fully displayed by the rolling collar and fantastic green silk necktie, knotted after the fashion of an *étudiant* of the Parisian studios, the broad somewhat heavy shoulders encased in the well-fitting velvet coat with its broad lapels, the left of which bore the ubiquitous emblem, a huge and magnificent specimen of a sunflower. With the velvet coat he wore knee breeches, black silk hose and buckled shoes."

In those days, at New York, the Lambs Club in its old Twenty-sixth Street quarters, was the centre of æsthetic and intellectual interests, and of comradely associations, on the part of men eminent in the dramatic profession. Its atmosphere then corresponded closely to that of the Players Club to-day, though its constituency was more strictly "professional" and "bohemian" than the Players of the present, in keeping with that air of greater mystery and clannishness which then characterised all members of the theatrical craft.

As a distinguished guest of honour, Oscar Wilde was welcomed at the Lambs, where Lester Wallack and Steele MacKaye were the chief officers of the club; and doubtless it was there that my father and Wilde first met each other, during the early part of 1882. The scintillance of their minds, and the ardour of their mutual art interests, formed an immediate ground for companionable discussions and for projected plans of work together. Both of them were dominant figures in a strong limelight of public curiosity.

In 1882, Steele MacKaye was forty years old, and appeared (as always, till almost the last of his life) ten years younger.

MACKAYE'S CAUSE CELEBRE: "DEL-SAR-TEE" PARODIES

At that time, in New York there was probably no other American artist of the theatre whose personality was so vividly and polemically before the public. The lustre of his unprecedented success at the Madison Square Theatre was far from being dimmed by his startlingly abrupt departure from its directorship. The public knew nothing of the personal moods of dark depression revealed in his private letters. To the public he was proudly militant. His quarrel with the Pharisaical managers, in which an unanimity

Whether said Richard Steel was kin to the famous dramatist Richard Steele is unknown to history, but well known to history is the fact that "Dick" Steele, the English dramatist (like the American dramatist, Steele MacKaye), was not merely a bountiful maker of theatre pieces, but even more bountifully a maker of after-theatre parties, and—at least on one occasion—while presiding as host to a great tableful of guests, was untimely visited by a bevy of bailiffs, come to arrest him for a large debt.

Thereupon, as practical dramatist, Steele improvised an instantaneous subplot. Taking the bailiffs aside, he tipped them with his last pocket-silver to don his own livery. Thus attired, in the rôle of a large retinue of house servants, they waited on the festal board, till mine host at midnight had speeded his last parting guest. On that cue, the bailiffs, doffing the livery of Steele for their own of the law, bore off the resourceful dramatist—not to the playhouse, but the jailhouse.

That was in the Eighteenth Century. In the 1880's of the Nineteenth, though bailiffs and debt-prisons were long antedated for insolvent dramatists, an analogous case of dramatic resourcefulness on the part of Steele MacKaye is thus cited in an article by Nym Crinkle:

"MacKaye was absolutely ignorant of the value of money, in any other sense than that it had purchasing power. He was princely not only in his schemes, but in his habits. He associated with the wealthy young men of the town and outdid them all in magnificence of his hospitality. . . . I was myself present at a dinner party which he gave at Delmonico's, that cost one hundred and fifty dollars, when he borrowed the money of one of the guests at the table to pay for it. I had this from his own lips. His munificence and magnificence dazzled the ordinary man, even when that man was a millionaire. No one ever saw him at the foot of the table. If he was not at the head, he was not there."

The above is metaphorically in keeping with this "colour-piece" by David Belasco *:

"Whenever Steele MacKaye dined in state, champagne flowed like water, and birds of paradise were served by an army of servants, whether MacKaye had a nickel or not."

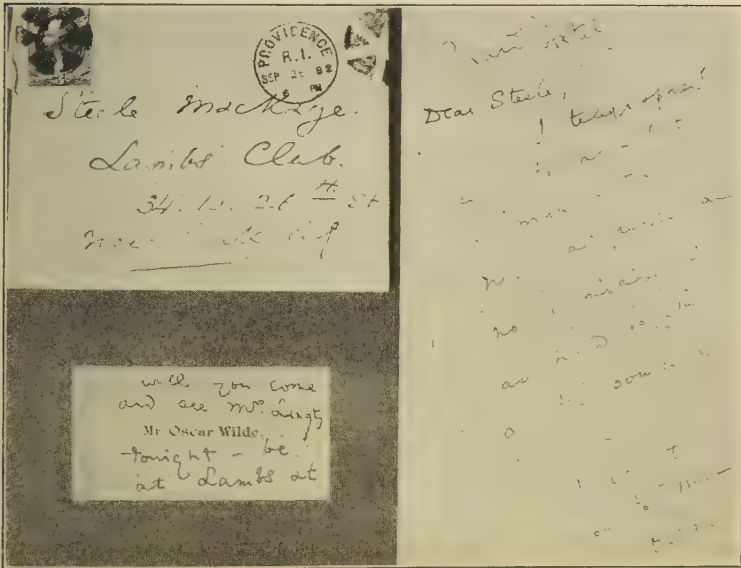
I cite these statements because they convey a popular impression of my father, undoubtedly characteristic and metaphorically true.

* This, and other statements by him, quoted in this chapter and the following, are from the Interview, before cited, on page i, 374.



"THE DREAM THEATRE"

Design by Steele MacKaye for combined hotel and theatre at Broadway and 40th St., where MacKaye planned to produce plays by Oscar Wilde, with Mary Anderson in the chief rôle, backed by George W. Childs and other capitalists for \$1,000,000 (from a blueprint, 1882; pages i, 411; ii, 179).



ENVELOPE TO WILDE'S LETTER AND WILDE'S CALLING CARD With message for MacKaye.

LETTER FROM OSCAR WILDE TO STEELE MACKAYE, 1882 (page 445).

MARY ANDERSON



Ind ex.

LILLIE LANGTRY



The reader, however, who here has glimpsed behind the scenes of his outer life into self-revealings of his letters printed in this memoir, may thereby know how to gauge the better the just proportions of his character.

CONVERTING ELOQUENCE; *POLONIUS*, CALVIN AND THE POPE;
DAZZLING CONVERSATIONS

With his princely hospitality went always his personal eloquence; and of that David Belasco has also said, in continuance of his foregoing statements to me:

"Your father was the most wonderful talker in the country. *Hamlet* could not handle *Polonius* to compare with him. Steele MacKaye could make any man a *Polonius*:

" 'The moon is green?'

" 'Why, of course.'

" 'No, I am sure it's red.'

" 'Why, yes, after all—red. *Of course*, it's red!'

"I believe not another man on the earth had his peculiar power of speech. It was often dangerous to sit at table and talk with him. Oscar Wilde, or any other man I ever heard, was no match for him in sheer eloquence and convincing charm of argument."

Another, who knew him well, has facetiously said of him:

"Give him the chance for a ten minute tête-à-tête, and Steele MacKaye could convert Calvin to Catholicism, or the Pope to become a blue Presbyterian."

In eloquence, though MacKaye lacked the epigrammatic phrasings and sensuous artistry of style which graced the speech and writings of Wilde, he shared with him an imaginative compulsion of personality, and excelled him in selfless fervour for impersonal aims.

It would be alluring to outwit Old Time, in retrospect of the year, 1882, and "listen in" at the Lambs upon the conversation of Wilde and MacKaye, in their brilliance of contrasts and resemblances. But "where are the snows of yesterday?" The words of those dazzling conversations are long since vanished in thin air; yet the theme of many of them is immanent in words of Wilde himself here preserved in a few brief letters, and proves to be no other than the theme of that "dream theatre" of my father's, which gleams elusively through these darkling years of the early 'Eighties,—ever on the verge of fulfilment.

Now, in the summer and autumn of '82, its earlier contours are

flushed and transformed by a new light of promise. Glancing back to page 433 (May 16th: the phrase including "some gentlemen") and again to the Appendix ("June 16th, 1882": the theatre "drawing by messenger boy, at 9:30 P.M."), the connection of those plans for an imminent new theatre with the personnel of the following letters (Steele MacKaye, Oscar Wilde, Mary Anderson and Hamilton Griffin) grows convincingly apparent. In brief, the following appears to have been what "occurred" in their conversations:

A NEW THEATRE: *THE NIHILISTS*, *THE DUCHESS OF PADUA*;
WILDE AND MACKAYE, ASSOCIATES

With his growing friendship, MacKaye communicated to Wilde the nature of his new designs and inventions for a new theatre, to outshine the Madison Square and outwit the Mallorys, and proposed to Wilde the brilliantly congenial plan of placing this model theatre, under his own direction, at the disposal of Wilde, for the production of the latter's plays, *The Nihilists*, and *The Duchess of Padua*.—The theatre building would commence as soon as the "gentlemen" who had already "guaranteed the money to carry it out" should approve a procurable site (desirably at 33rd Street and Broadway). The play-producing would commence on the theatre's opening, the following season, with one of Wilde's plays, preferably *The Duchess of Padua*, which Wilde was then to complete for Mary Anderson (under contract with her stepfather, Hamilton Griffin); or, if Wilde should finish it in time, they might produce the play earlier, at some regular New York playhouse.

As lions in the way of this plan were doubts whether the desirable site for the new theatre could be negotiated for the guaranteeing "gentlemen" in time to consummate the plan, and whether "the Griffin" would agree to having MacKaye direct the production of *The Duchess of Padua* with the "absolute control" of the production which he conditioned. To these were added the dubious conditions of MacKaye's own finances and health. But the combined ardours of youth and art fear no lions in their path. To these doubts, Wilde enthusiastically exclaimed to MacKaye (in the words of one of his letters): "*Do not yet despair! You and I together should conquer the world. Why not? Let us do it!*"

Accordingly, in September, '82, Wilde definitely set about removing the doubt involved in "the Griffin." On "Wed., Sept. 19th," he was preparing for a month's New England-Canada lecture tour,

and, on the eve of starting from New York by a midnight train, he was anxious to discuss with MacKaye various phases of the matter.

"NINE ADDRESSES AND NO DOMICILE"; "THE GRIFFIN";
"O ART AND KENTUCKY!"

But to catch MacKaye on the wing (engaged as the latter was in such multiple affairs as those detailed in his letter to his father, on page 433, involving numerous addresses) evidently required the aerial agility of a gerfalcon; for on that day, before evening, Wilde had despatched to his quarry one telegram, had called personally at two of MacKaye's addresses, left one note by hand at one place, and despatched another note by messenger to a third address—as the following two communications testify:

(1)—"Office of F. Pirrson, 1249 Broadway" (printed letterhead)
"Steele MacKaye, Esq.

The Studios, Corner of 57 and 6th Avenue.
New York City

"Dear Steele,

"Will you be disengaged this evening? If so let us meet and dine together. Be at Lambs Club at six—will you?

Yours, Oscar Wilde."

(2)—(A folded note, without envelope, addressed to)

"Steele MacKaye, Lambs Club, 34 W. 26

Grand Hotel

"Dear Steele,

"I telegraphed you to-day—but a man with nine addresses and no domicile is as hard to find as the source of the Nile—

"I want you to dine—

Oscar."

Perhaps "the source of the Nile" was then reached and the "Boy of the Lambs," with his guest, discussed at the club the portentous Hamilton Griffin of "Kentucky" and his lovely stepdaughter, Mary Anderson, as well as their own roseate project, "the theatre," and the "lions in the way," before the midnight train moved north; for the next day, Wilde wrote to MacKaye from Boston:

"THE WORLD IS AT OUR FEET"; LURKING FATES; AN EARLIER "EARL
OF PAWTUCKET"

"Steele MacKaye, Esq.

Office of F. Pirrson, 1251 Broadway

New York City

"My dear Steele,

"No news from the Anderson—from the Griffin none. O art and

Kentucky, how ill your alliance is! She is sweet and good. If I could see her I could arrange it all. I will try to do so—but I will not be back till the twenty-third.

"Write to me at 1267 Broadway what you are doing—what you think of "*Vera*" *—what the Griffin's objections were. *I shall look for a long letter about the theatre.*

"Do not yet despair; you and I together should conquer the world. Why not? Let us do it!

Ever yours

Oscar."

"Back" in Boston, on Sunday, Sept 23rd, at the Hotel Vendome, he apparently conquered one lion in their path, by outfacing "the Griffin," and winning over "the lovely creature he guards" (Mary Anderson) to their views; for again, three days later, he wrote to MacKaye at the Lambs, from "Providence":

"My dear Steele, I have spoken to the Griffin and to the lovely creature he guards—and told them that you *might be induced* to accept the superintendence and management of the production of my tragedy—the *Duchess of Padua*. I explained to them that you must have absolute control of everything and everybody. *They agreed:*

"Now she wants this produced on January 22nd, and I think we might bring this out first—as it affords real opportunity for artistic setting and mounting which the Nihilist Drama does not. They or rather *she* is ready to spend *any money on it*. She is dreadfully alarmed at the prospect of its non-production—and I told her it could not be produced unless a great deal of money was spent on it.

"Now I want you to write and make an appointment with her at Fifth Avenue Hotel this week. *He* is a brute—a γρῦφον—a padded horror—with none but the showman's idea—but she is simple and good, and tractable and lovable—and with you as the practical manager success will be assured. After this we will do the *Nihilists*—and *then the world is at our feet!*

"But to begin with the *Nihilists* would be very foolish; as it affords no opportunity for artistic and beautiful setting. It is a play 'Charley Harris' could almost mount!

"I lecture Pawtucket, Friday, North Attleboro, Saturday. Will be at Boston Sunday. (Hotel Vendome)—*O. W.*"

What strange contrasts were to befall the hopes expressed in this letter! Within four months of its writing, Wilde then hoped to complete his tragedy, *The Duchess of Padua*, and personally to produce it with my father in New York, at the height of the dramatic season and of his own fame. Instead, before the tragic lady of his imagination was to reveal her face, Wilde was to complete

* *Vera* is his play, *The Nihilists*. See Vol. II, ciii, for another Wilde letter.

his own tragedy of reality, when, nine years later—himself then an outcast in Reading gaol—his *Duchess* was first produced, under another title, anonymously in New York.*

All unaware, however, of lurking fates, having posted to New York the above letter to MacKaye, Wilde—in gay, conquering spirits—pursued his life of contrasts on that small-town pilgrimage through Massachusetts, where, on the following (Friday) night, he unconsciously enacted the title rôle of a play by Augustus Thomas, appearing resplendently as another and earlier *Earl of Pawtucket* before the gaze of dumb-stricken Yankee villagers.

After more than a fortnight of further lecturing in New England and Canada—including Halifax—he ended his car-begrimed journey in New York, on Monday (October 15), plucked from his silk coat a dishevelled sunflower, and wrote again to the Lambs:

"WORN OUT"; JEFFERSON AS *BOB ACRES*; LILLIE LANGTRY:
A REVIEW BY WILDE

"Dear Steele,

"Come here at 6 o'clock.

"Here means 61 Irving Place. I am worn out and horrid, needing much your delightful companionship. We will dine quietly, and I have a Box for *Bob Acres*, Jefferson—also much to talk about.

Eveyrs
Oscar."

What they had then "to talk about" must certainly have been concerned with the contents of that "long letter about *the theatre*," which Wilde had asked MacKaye to write him, as well as with the results of MacKaye's "appointment to meet Mary Anderson at the Fifth Avenue Hotel," in regard to *The Duchess of Padua* which Miss Anderson "wanted produced on January 22nd."—Mary Anderson herself has stated † that Wilde had already submitted to her "a scenario" which she "liked." Other occupations of Wilde, however, on his American tour, appear to have delayed his completing this scenario in play form in time for its production by that date.

In any event, on that September evening at Irving Place, after their "much to talk about," Wilde and MacKaye must have kindled fresh fires of conversation from faggots of the dry humour of Joe Jefferson in his theatre dressing-room—after they had watched, from Wilde's box, an incomparably funny impersonation of *Bob*

* Cf. excerpt from Sherard's *The Real Oscar Wilde*, in footnote, on page i, 451.

† Cf. her letter to the biographer, on page i, 453.

Acres, in Sheridan's *Rivals*. When I saw "Joe" as *Bob*, years later, the comedy of his inimitable acting was so contagious that I still remember the roaring gusts of his audience—one old gentleman, in a dress suit, literally rolling into the aisle in a fit of wild laughter—and the racking twinges of my own ribs, that ached for hours afterward from my almost insufferable laughing. In that old-comedy presence, Wilde and MacKaye must have forgotten temporarily their new plans of high tragedy for "The Duchess" and "the Anderson."

In partly recovering this "lost chapter" from fragmentary pieces of record, a little calling-card, with "OSCAR WILDE" æsthetically printed on finely pebbled paper, now leads to Wilde's interest in another renowned lady of the footlights, who—in November of 1882—had just arrived in New York from London. On this calling-card—a line, written to my father in Wilde's clear, round script, reads:

"Will you come and see Mrs. Langtry tonight—be at Lambs at 6.30."

Forty-three years later, a New York newspaperman wrote in a column of the Sun:

"I am moved to say that Oscar Wilde came to New York in the train of Mrs. Langtry, with whom he was then in love. I happened to be a printer of the World at the time, and I remember that he came to the World office late on the night of Langtry's first appearance and wrote a criticism of the performance. Incidentally, he came into the composing-room, in the course of the evening, in his knee-breeches, and the force cheerfully responded to the command: 'Growl, animals, growl!'"

Noticing this item, Mr. Alexander Woolcott,* dramatic critic of the Sun, soon afterward unearthed a copy of that old issue of the World (Nov. 7, 1882) therein referred to, and reprinted, in full,—in his column of The Sun, Feb. 9, 1925—Wilde's review of Mrs.

* Mr. Woolcott has kindly provided me with the newspaper material, here quoted. In reprinting the above item, he commented in his column (Feb. 9): "My friend, the erstwhile printer, was in error in saying that Wilde arrived in New York in the wake of the *Jersey Lily*. He had already been lecturing in our astounded country for some ten months, when Mrs. Langtry arrived to make her début in Mr. Abbey's Park Theatre, which stood in Broadway above Twentieth Street. That honored playhouse (hot, perhaps, with resentment) burned down rather pointedly on the afternoon of the scheduled day, and the distracted Mr. Abbey, taking a sympathetic telegram from Lester Wallack a thought too literally, moved his celebrated visitor, bag and baggage, into Wallack's Theatre, where her season was able to begin the next week. Meantime the *Jersey Lily* herself, in great distress and black velvet, received the reporters of the disaster in her suite at the Albermarle."

Langtry's first appearance, at Wallack's Theatre, as *Hester Grazebrook* in the play, *An Unequal Match*. In portions of his review—all of which would be significant to include in some collection of Wilde's stray writings, as representing his only dramatic criticism written in America—Wilde wrote:

"It is only in the best Greek gems, on the silver coins of Syracuse, or among the marble figures of the Parthenon frieze, that one can find the ideal representation of the marvelous beauty of that face, which laughed through the leaves last night as *Hester Grazebrook*. . . . Pure Greek it is, with the grave low forehead, the exquisitely arched brow, the noble chiseling of the mouth, shaped as if it were the mouthpiece of an instrument of music; the supreme and splendid curve of the cheek, the augustly pillared throat which bears it all . . . purely Greek, because its essence is that of beauty based on absolute mathematical laws . . . indeed this wonderful face, seen to-night for the first time in America, has filled and permeated with the pervading image of its type the whole of our modern art in England. . . .

"The scenery was, of course, prepared in a hurry—six days—still much of it was very good indeed. . . . Much more, however, entirely out of keeping and meaningless. . . . But I am beginning to quarrel generally with most modern scene painting. . . . A scene is primarily a decorative background for the actors, and should be kept always subordinate first to the players, their dress, gesture and action, and secondly, to the fundamental principle of decorative art, which is not to imitate, but to suggest nature.—If the landscape is given its full realistic value, the value of the figures to which it serves as a background is impaired and often lost; and the painted hangings of the Elizabethan age were a far more artistic, and so a far more rational, form of scenery than most modern scene painting is; and *from the same master hand which designed the curtain at the Madison Square Theatre I would like very much to see a good decorative landscape in scene painting.*"

WILDE AND THE MADISON SQUARE THEATRE CURTAIN; SCENIC PAINTING;
WILDE AND MACKAYE AT WALLACK'S

This "master hand which designed the curtain * at the Madison Square Theatre" was, as we have seen in this memoir, that of Louis C. Tiffany, my father's friend and fellow student under George Inness, whom my father had selected to execute that splendid decoration for his theatre in Twenty-Fourth Street.

Wilde's review was written on the midnight of November 6th, '82, and the above excerpt from it—read in conjunction with his words to my father on his calling-card, written very shortly before—presents with vivid probability the image of Wilde and MacKaye,

* Cf. references to the Madison Square curtain on pages i, 343, and i, 347.

seated together in the Lambs Club at 6.30 of that evening, discussing MacKaye's theatre curtain, his friendship with Tiffany and Inness, the methods of Claude and Titian (whose works both had studied in Paris) and the related principles of scenic painting and decoration—such as MacKaye had himself practised as theatre designer and director at the little Madison Square playhouse, two blocks away from their dining table.

So, continuing their congenial discourse, while the club porter called a hansom, they drove together through Twenty-sixth Street, round the corner to Thirtieth, and alighted on Broadway, at the gas-blazing entrance of Wallack's Theatre. There the silver buckles of Wilde's knee-breeches and the orbed sunflower in his silk lapel outblazed the gas-jets, in the dazzled eyes of lobby-thronging ladies, sweeping their long-bustled trains, with fluttered hearts beneath their hour-glass bodices—as Wilde and MacKaye passed in to the Stage-box, to watch Lily Langtry "laugh through the leaves" as *Hester Grazebrook*.

The distractions of "the Jersey Lily" and the duties of the lecture platform appear to have delayed Wilde's completion of *The Duchess of Padua*; for six months after that November night, he wrote from London to MacKaye concerning his play, then but lately completed. Before turning, however, to that seventh and last surviving item of record among his letters to my father, a picturesque vista of the interim, gleaned from the pages of R. H. Sherard's book, *The Real Oscar Wilde*,* presents a sequel in Paris to the closing of this lost chapter in America.

"THE DUCHESS" AND WILDE IN PARIS; A WORD OF REJECTION, 1883

Picturing in recollection a February evening of 1883, when he dined with Wilde in the Hotel du Quai Voltaire, at Paris, Sherard thus comments upon their conversation then, and describes what later took place there, "towards the end of April", apropos of "The Duchess":

"The luxuriousness of the repast and the indifference with which Wilde discharged the formidable bill that was presented, whilst our coffee was making itself on the table between us, confirmed me in my conclusion that he was a man of wealth. As a matter of fact, he was living on his expectations from *The Duchess of Padua*. He was writing this under contract with a certain Mr. Hamilton Griffin, acting on be-

* Page 234 of *The Real Oscar Wilde*, by Robert Harborough Sherard, T. Warner Laurie, Ltd., London.

half of Mary Anderson. By this contract he had agreed to 'write for Miss Mary Anderson a first-class Five-Act tragedy to be completed on or before March 1st, 1883.' The 'first-class Five-Act tragedy' was to become Mary Anderson's absolute property, the consideration being a payment to him of five thousand dollars of which four thousand dollars was to be paid 'on Mary Anderson's acceptance and approval of the said tragedy.' So that in those February days when I first met Oscar Wilde he was in the expectation of receiving, some time in March, the sum of eight hundred pounds. He was, therefore, naturally full of the *Duchess* and spoke much about her. . . .

"I do not know on what grounds Mary Anderson rejected the manuscript. She may possibly have regretted her bargain and have taken advantage of the fact that the manuscript, which was not finished till 15th March, did not reach her until more than a month after the date stipulated in the agreement. It cannot have been on the ground that the work was not a 'first-class tragedy,' for such it has now been universally recognised to be.

"I happened to be with Oscar Wilde in his sitting-room in the Hotel du Quai Voltaire when her cabled decision reached him. It was some time towards the end of April. Not having heard from her, and his funds running low, he had that morning cabled to her in California begging for an answer. We were sitting smoking, when the waiter brought in *une dépêche pour Monsieur*. Wilde opened it and read the disappointing news without giving the slightest sign of chagrin or annoyance. He tore a tiny strip off the blue form, rolled it up into a pellet, and put it into his mouth. Then he passed the cable over to me and said: 'Robert, this is very tedious.' After that he never referred again to his disappointment.

"I admired his *sang froid* greatly at the time, though I did not know then that this refusal of his work meant the loss to him of a large sum of money on which he had absolutely counted, a tremendous set-back in his career as a dramatist, and worse still, the obligation to give up his elegant existence in Paris and return to London and the drudgery of the provincial platform. But, as I say, he showed no disappointment at all. . . . Since I have realised what Mary Anderson's refusal meant to him, and remember how he took what to many would have been a knock-down blow, my admiration for his self-control and his dignity has been great." *

* Sherard's narrative gives this further information concerning Wilde's play: "This Opus II had been curtly rejected, and was threatened with the oblivion which very nearly enshrouded it, for it was not until 1891 that it was produced in New York by Lawrence Barrett, and that anonymously—not as *Opus Second*, nor indeed as *The Duchess of Padua*—but under the title of *Guido Ferrati*. It enjoyed a *success d'estime* and was well received by the critics. The New York Tribune found that it was the work of 'a practised writer and a good one,' and the critic maintained that he had had the pleasure of reading it several years previously in manuscript, when it was called *The Duchess of Padua*, and knew it to be the work of Oscar Wilde."

This "critic of The New York Tribune" was William Winter, an intimate friend of Steele MacKaye, who—having then *The Duchess* manuscript in his possession—probably read it, or loaned it, to Winter.

"QUAILS IN THE DESERT"; "THE STRONGEST WORK I HAVE EVER DONE"

If at Paris, in April, '83, Wilde "showed no disappointment at all" at the rejection of his play, he certainly was taking his "knock-down blow" in the same bravely hopeful spirit a month later in London, for in a letter then to my father (postmarked "London, May 17, '83"), he gives no intimation that he then considered his play rejected at all by Mary Anderson. On the contrary, he writes of it in a mood of hopeful zest, and remarks (of this "first-class five-act tragedy") that it has "got capital comedy in it"; thus appearing to confirm a remark of Mary Anderson in her letter (on page 453): "Poor Oscar always was an optimist."

The following is Wilde's letter, addressed to "Steele MacKaye, Esq., 807 Fourth Avenue, New York City, United States":

"116 Park Street, Grosvenor Square.

"My dear Steele,

"Will you kindly let me have the \$200 I lent you? I have had a great many expenses over here and bills of my Oxford days have crowded on me as thick as the quails in the desert, and not as nice.

"Norman told me he saw you in New York looking brilliant. I have been in Paris, and written * my play for Mary Anderson. I am greatly pleased with it. It is the strongest work I have ever done—and got capital comedy in it, and wonderful picturesque effects. I hope all you people are well and have not forgotten me.

"I will expect to hear soon from you.

Very sincerely yrs.,

Oscar Wilde."

In respect to this self-critic's opinion of his own work, this letter contains literary interest in his comment concerning *The Duchess of Padua*:—"It is the strongest work I have ever done."

One letter more concerning this Paduan lady, her once sanguine author and once prospective producer, their erstwhile immanent "dream theatre," and their once dreamed-of "star," to envision the elusive lady—now leads this record of a darkling year of illusions and disillusionments into light of our present era.

In the autumn of 1924, I wrote to Madame de Navarro (née Mary Anderson) at her home in England, enclosing for her a copy of Oscar Wilde's letter of September 26, '82, to my father, asking whether her recollection could confirm for this memoir, the letter's references to herself. To my letter she graciously responded by the following answer:

* "Written" must, of course, mean *completed*, or *rewritten*, for *The Duchess* was already at least partly completed in America, in 1882.

ANOTHER WORD FROM MARY ANDERSON, 1924; DREAM HISTORY

"Court Farm, Broadway, Worcestershire.
Nov. 11th, 1924.

"Dear Mr. MacKaye,

"Thank you for your very kind letter. I only wish I had known your celebrated father well enough to give you some interesting material for your book. Unfortunately for me, I knew him only little, but he impressed me as being a very distinguished personality, and a very courteous, gracious *gentleman*. I use the word in its full meaning.

"The Oscar Wilde letter does refer to me, for Griffin was my step-father's name. Though Oscar did not seem to see the very kind side of him, he was a wonderful friend to me. Oscar wrote *The Duchess of Padua* for me. I liked his scenario for it, but the play when finished was very disappointing, and I refused it. So I gather the allusions to the production, etc., were mainly the vagaries of a poet's imagination *—Poor Oscar always was an optimist!

"I hope your book will have the success such a work merits, and look forward to its coming out.

Yours very sincerely

"*Mary Anderson de Navarro.*"

Besides portraying "the Griffin of Kentucky" in a shape less mythological than the image conjured by Wilde's Oxfordian comments, the above letter answers—in her own words—the query in Sherard's book regarding Mary Anderson's reasons for rejecting Wilde's play. The letter also brings to a close this fragmentary record † of a "lost chapter" in our theatre's history.

GENIUS AND COMMERCE; A THEATRE THAT NEVER "WAS"

It is, to be sure, a chapter concerned wholly with the dreams of artists, yet the true history of the theatre's art is concerned with nothing else. And if there be one moral appendable to the foregoing record (as to all of this memoir) it is, that the valid dreams of true artists are the *only* impalpable architecture which serenely survives the swift ruin of every "solidly" commercial age. Recognition of this truth by the masters of commerce would incalculably increase the stature of their own times in beauty and happiness, with accruing prestige to themselves.

Of solid rock in the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens, of solid oak timber in the old Globe Theatre, at London, and of "solid" invest-

* In his letter of Sept. 26, '82, to Steele MacKaye, however (on page i, 446), Wilde's specific reference to his talk (about *The Duchess*) with Mary Anderson—"Now she wants this produced on January 22nd"—would appear to be more than the mere vagary "of a poet's imagination."

† For an after-reference to the "dream theatre" here concerned, see excerpt of a letter from Steele MacKaye, August 15, 1888, on page ii, 179.

ments which once encrusted them, what survives to-day and to-morrow, except the still sentient memory of Genius, which reared them to their creatives uses? The altitude of artistic genius rarely attains to the peaks of Sophocles and of Shakespeare, but the timeless measure of every age is the relativity of that altitude to its surrounding horizons of commerce. However modest the dimensions, the law of survival is the same.

In 1882-'83, at New York City, solid rock and oak timber *might* have given corporeal form to an imagined theatre, wherein the varied genius of the then future authors of *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The World Finder*—in association with the impersonating plastic beauty of "the Anderson"—might have co-operated to create a playhouse of art, wit and invention which would signally have advanced a hoped-for "renaissance" of the theatre—if also the masters of Commerce had seen the light of their needful co-operation.

If that had indeed occurred, nearly half a century ago, who can say what brilliance of those focussed gifts might have illumined the interval, and what eclipsing after-shadows of thwarted growth might never have darkened, to the detriment of our theatre's weal.—No one, of course, can say. Yet, despite *if's* and *might's*, this much can truly be said:—Since clear dreams are the real fabric of history, the clearly projected "dream theatre" of Steele MacKaye—which then just missed of actual wood and stone, to house his productions of the plays of Oscar Wilde—is now as valid to the record of this chronicle as his other expert dreams, tangibly incorporated in his Madison Square Theatre, and in the beautiful artistry of two other "actual" theatres, which his undiscouraged will succeeded in consummating afterward.

Their "solid" architecture, too, has long since given place to the impalpable. What they *were* is now one with that other—which never "was." Yet, begotten in an artist's imagination, they may all still beget their nobler offspring in the imaginations of other artists—if their meanings can be given living tissue of memory. That, of course, is the vital use of all biography—and the chief hope of this memoir.

CHAPTER XVI

BUILDING WITH MEN

Lyceum Theatre-School—"Back from Elba"

New York—Ridgefield—Mt. Vernon

Jan., 1883—April, 1885

"Steele MacKaye's statue needs not be erected. Men were his clay. He moulded playwrights, actors, poets. He lives as a personality that admiring memory crowns."—George C. Hazleton, author of *The Yellow Jacket*.

PHILOSOPHY AND FACT; A LABORATORY ON A BATTLE-GROUND

THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, MY FATHER'S MIND WAS THE FOCAL POINT of two mutually opposing forces, which wrestled there for separate dominion, while he sought ever to fuse them into one co-operative harmony. These were the polar forces of philosophy and fact; the potential and the actual; ideal perfection and its practical embodiment. As his nature was uncompromising, it is no wonder he was perennially torn by his task as creative arbiter between them.

He imagined a theatre which should beautifully embody a synthetic philosophy of æsthetic expression. As his laboratory for this experiment in the social chemistry of art, he chose the centre of theatrical forces in his country—Broadway: the Broadway of the 'Seventies and 'Eighties, in the nineteenth century.

He might have turned, like others, to serene academic shades and impractically taught "unapplied" disciples for a lifetime, for money galore was then forthcoming for such purpose; but, instead, he sought a practical application and embodiment of ideals—if need be, by dint of battle. Or he might, like others, have accepted Broadway as he found it; but he sought, instead, to leaven it with the perfection he had found in his serener studies: a task perhaps which only a Quixote would dream of tackling; for, to accomplish it, he had to build his experimental laboratory of art on a truculent battle-ground.

During the first decade of his public career, the battering stress of financial counter-currents had frequently been alleviated, at critical junctures, by his wealthy father. From now on, however, the Colonel's assistance was to be turned more and more to the needs of his son's growing family and household, less and less for the needs of that son's ever-growing experiments in art and inven-

tion.—Had the self-earned fortune of *Hazel Kirke* been rightfully accorded to its author, even in part, these increasing needs of his profession would have been subsidised by his own creative work. As a bar to that fulfilment, stood a certain “party of the first part,” waxing fat on his brains.

Now once more had appeared the bright promise of a highly artistic venture; \$600,000 “guaranteed” for a noble theatre, in association with another imaginative artist¹, seeking also perfection in the theatre’s art—Oscar Wilde, in the young prime of his brilliant craftsmanship. As a bar to *that* fulfilment, stood now—all unconsciously—“the Griffin, of Kentucky.”

We have seen how that luring rainbow of promise faded in cloud banks overseas. Dream theatre and capitalists disappeared in that eclipse of a “star.” Mary Anderson and her Kentucky backer were probably both unaware what a double blow was struck by that “curt rejection” cabled to Wilde in Paris, rebounding to strike also in New York. That way was closed. Where, then, should Steele MacKaye turn next, to reach his goal?

TEACHING DEVOTED DISCIPLES; SARGENT AND CURRY, THEIR TRIBUTES

The path of æsthetic philosophy still beckoned; yet even there the way led not to some cloistral, endowed university, but to “the organisation of a dramatic school.” More needful capitalists again, and none but the artist-philosopher himself to convince and corral them, for “a promoting company.”—What a tranquil rose-garden was the life of a theatre artist in those old days of the 'Eighties, on Broadway—and how serenely roseate it still shines and beckons there, after forty years!

At least, Steele MacKaye was then staunchly endowed by the fellowship and homage of a little group of devoted disciples—his well-nigh perennial pupils. Among these were two men—both of Boston—who afterwards became eminent as the heads of schools of expression, founded upon MacKaye’s teachings: Dr. Franklin H. Sargeant, President of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, New York, and Dr. Samuel S. Curry, President of the Curry School of Expression, Boston. At the Madison Square Theatre, Franklin Sargeant had been engaged by the Mallorys to carry on there a portion of the work my father had begun in drilling actors for road companies. Not long before his death (in 1924), Dr. Sargeant wrote for this memoir: *

* The first half of Dr. Sargeant’s statement has been quoted on page i, 290.

"MY MASTER—MORE THAN ALL THE REST COMBINED"

"On coming to the Madison Square Theatre I immediately became a pupil of Steele MacKaye and was daily under his tutelage. Meanwhile, I had studied under some of the most famous experts in England, Germany, Paris, and in this country; but I am quite content to-day to speak of Steele MacKaye as my principal master, whose teachings mean more to me than all the rest combined.

"Steele MacKaye was then a very busy man. He had rooms near Twelfth Street, on Broadway, with General George Sheridan. *My lessons were usually very late at night, sometimes as late as three o'clock.* Most of the time we sat on opposite sides of the table, I taking notes and he expounding. At times we would practise before a pier glass. . . . My first lesson comprised the transition of the body from one foot to the other, which I practised for one entire hour. And how grateful I have ever been, particularly for that first lesson, securing as it did the command of the very fundamental principle of the *harmonic poise* of the body. . . . One illustration (which he gave in that original lecture I heard in Boston) was the delivery of the soliloquy, 'To be or not to be,' without any movement of the body, except swaying on the ankles. . . . These nightly lessons were filled with many periods of actual inspiration on his part, in which language and thought poured itself forth in an overflowing and brilliant stream. After each lesson, I spent hours in solitude, recalling many a wonderful thought.—His method in teaching was essentially scientific and mathematical. Nothing was stated ever that could not be put in the form of a scientific law. That was the great satisfaction in all his philosophy. I say *his* philosophy, for, although he owed his inspiration to Delsarte, *he himself developed a great deal that Delsarte had left in an unfinished state, methodised much that was left in a purely inspirational and fanciful form by his master.*"

The spirit of this statement by Franklin Sargent is voiced also in the following, by Professor Curry *:

"A GREAT GENIUS"; A LESSON "ON THE SAND AT CONEY ISLAND"

"The world knew Steele MacKaye by his plays, his acting and his wonderful lectures. There is, however, a side of MacKaye which only a few of us were fortunate enough to know. I refer to him as a teacher. In the very first lesson he gave me, I came in contact with a different man, to my mind a much greater man, than I felt in hearing his lectures, seeing him act, or listening to his plays. His deep insight, his careful philosophic discriminations, his creative power which awoke in him such great energy in response to a question: these permeated all his teaching.

"One of his greatest lessons was given to me during two hours on the sand at Coney Island. The careless crowds were passing, but he was oblivious to all else save the ideas he was imparting. I preserve with

* Written to me by S. S. Curry, from "60 Bay State Road, Boston, Sept 15, 1916."

great reverence a drawing he made at that lesson.—It has always been my great regret that he did not concentrate upon teaching the real nature of pantomimic expression and the practical development, on a higher artistic plane, of Dramatic Action. *He could have contributed a work which would have been a blessing to human education, to the whole psychology of expression, to art, civilisation and the race.*

"Nearly all we have left of his inspiring thoughts, his careful experiments and observations, are the scattered, fragmentary notes of a few students. All the notes I have seen printed * absolutely pervert the depths of his insight, showing that they were recorded by those who did not thoroughly understand the principles involved.

"Steele MacKaye was a great genius in many directions the world never knew, and I sometimes think it impossible for us ever to show him to the world as he really was."

Encouraged by the devoted interest of these two pupils, with some scores of others, Steele MacKaye was soon to found the first permanent dramatic school in the English-speaking world (still prosperously functioning in association with Columbia University) —a sequel to the earlier sporadic schools which he had started a decade before.

PATENT THEATRE-CHAIR: MACKAYE MANUFACTURING CO.

Meantime—as a phase of his dream-theatre plans, as well as a plan of livelihood—a large part of the year '83 was occupied by him in perfecting his automatic folding theatre-chair (patented Sept. 26, '83) and in organising "The MacKaye Manufacturing Company of New York," 811 Broadway,† for its manufacture and promotion. The President of this company was General George A. Sheridan, the father of Emma Sheridan (Fry), a pupil of my father's, who afterwards founded the Children's Educational Theatre, in New York, in which Mark Twain was enthusiastically interested.‡

BUTLERING AT A TRAMP'S BANQUET; INSTALLING NEW THEATRE-CHAIR: "YOUR HAT UNDER YOUR SEAT"

One day at our home in Mt. Vernon, where my father had invited the General and other guests to join us at Thanksgiving dinner, midway of the meal a rubicund face appeared in the window, and the tattered tramp who owned it began a hard luck story

* Cf. page ii, 269, concerning the published notes pirated from MacKaye's lectures. Also statement concerning same by S. S. Curry, in *The Voice*, March, 1885, quoted in Appendix, reference to page i, 458.

† Of this company, which lasted from Sept., 1883, to Jan., 1885—Steele MacKaye was Vice President and General Manager.

‡ Cf. footnote on page i, 114.



JAMES STEELE MACKAYE

PORTRAITS OF MACKAYE AND POE, FOR A SERIES OF "FAMOUS DOUBLES," 1880

At his Madison Square Theatre MacKaye, with Booth, organised for the Poe Statue a Benefit, at which MacKaye recited "The Raven" (p. 355).



EDGAR ALLAN POE



VICTORIEN SARDOU
French Dramatist (i, 184; ii, 32)



SARAH BERNHARDT
French Actress (i, 184, 361)



HENRY ARTHUR JONES
English Dramatist (ii, 43, and *Index*)



KYLE BELLEW
English Actor (i, 360; ii, 43)

in accents of Old Rye. Instantly my father sprang up from the table, heaped a tray with assorted viands, added a bottle of claret, and disappeared outdoors, whither I ran after him.

On a bank by the roadside he spread, for the "Wandering Willie," a white napkin and laid out there a Thanksgiving banquet, at which he himself played host and butler, uncorking the claret bottle for his astonished road-guest. Returning later with nuts and desert, he Godsped the down-and-outer on his shoeless way to his destination, White Plains, with a five-dollar bill pressed in his parting handclasp. I remember the Irish lilt in the tramp's farewell, as he reeled off up the road:—"Sure, gen'leman, it's bread on the waters, and the blessed saints will reward ye! And I'll sure send ye back them five bucks: maybe when I gets to White Plains—and maybe when I gets to the White Gates o' Peter!"

At that moment, those "five bucks" were part of a precarious margin raised by my father for launching his theatre-chair.* This invention included his device (introduced by him then for the first time) of stowing away the hats of theatre-patrons under their seats. Many millions, since then, have utilised that feature of it. A published report thus describes the invention and its use:

"At the Union Square Theatre there will be introduced the new-fashioned movable chairs invented by Steele MacKaye. Manager Sheridan Shook states: 'In my judgment, MacKaye's chair is going to be the theatre chair of the future.' . . . When the people come into the theatre the seats are all folded up; hence the parterre floor is almost bare and consists of a series of aisles running in both directions, with two seats like saddle-bags hung together at intervals. The chair itself comprises an iron conical standard, hollow in front, which occupies three or four inches at the base; each standard holds two swivel seats; (when folded, these look like easels; when in use they come parallel to each other), and the seat drops, supported by an unfolding brass piece. *Under the seat is an arrangement to put your hat in*, which is, therefore, underneath you, crown downward. Behind the seat is a wire arrangement in which the person sitting behind puts his overcoat. At the corner of the standard is a place for cane or umbrella."

"On the first night," wrote an after report, "as soon as the curtain rose, MacKaye's Union Square chair began to go off. Men suddenly disappeared in the orchestra. Horror-stricken people near by sat spell-bound, as the chair went through its appointed unlimbering and folding-up. The stage performance was punctuated with creaks and clankings. No one knew when the 'Delsarte' chair beneath him would explode."

* See Invention Designs, at end of Vol. One.

In regard to that opening night (Oct. 26, '83) my mother has written me:

"Oh, that Union Square night! By mistake, the chairs had been put too near together. This crowded people and kept the idea from working.—Again, though your father worked day and night with the workmen before the opening, there was not time enough between Saturday and Monday nights to install them properly; so the standards were not all set securely. Result: two chairs broke down during the performance, spilling the occupants to the floor—with consequent commotion! . . . Well, I shall never forget the agony of those catastrophes. In the midst of them, your father had left me in the audience, to go behind the scenes. When the performance was over, I looked for him in vain, but Gen. George Sheridan escorted me to the hotel where your father and I were staying that night. There I found your father stretched on the bed, staring at the ceiling. He looked up as I came in.—“Well, Mollie,” he said, “*that* effort has come to naught; now what next?”

This, however, was only a momentary desperation. The new theatre chair, properly installed at the Union Square, proved there eminently successful*; it was also installed later in the New York Bijou Opera House and in MacKaye's Lyceum Theatre, where it was used for two decades.

FRIENDSHIPS: HENRY IRVING, GEN. HORACE PORTER,
DR. MCLANE HAMILTON

During the summer and autumn of that year, my father saw a good deal of Henry Irving, who was on his first professional American visit.† They had become friends ten years earlier in London, through the English dramatist, W. G. Wills, in whose play *Eugene Aram* Irving was acting during the time MacKaye was playing *Hamlet* in England—the year before Irving himself first acted *Hamlet* there. On August 17 and 18, 1883, Bram Stoker arranged conferences between Irving and MacKaye. Four days later, General (later, Ambassador) Horace Porter participated in a dinner of “rare souls,” given by MacKaye to Irving, and wrote also concerning another dinner, at the Union League Club (“Nov. 17th, 11:30 P. M.”) given to Irving by Gen. Porter, at which my father “spoke felicitously.”

* On Dec. 6, 1883, the N. Y. Morning Journal wrote: “‘The new MacKaye safety chair is a great success,’ said the Manager of the Union Square Theatre. ‘On the first night, the workmen did not get through till fifteen minutes before the doors opened, and had placed them wrongly. Now the mistake has been corrected, there is no crowding and the new invention works perfectly.’—The improved MacKaye chair will soon replace the chairs at the Bijou.”

† Irving's first American tour opened with *The Bells*, Oct. 29, 1883.

Another friend of my father at this time was the grandson of Alexander Hamilton—Dr. Allan McLane Hamilton, afterwards distinguished as psychologist, alienist and surgeon. Years later, at Washington, just after the Great War, in connection with the opening production there by Walter Hampden of my play *George Washington* before members of Congress and the Cabinet, I conferred often at the Cosmos Club with Dr. Hamilton, who took special interest in those scenes of the play in which his famous forbear had a conspicuous rôle. At that time Dr. Hamilton recalled for me his old friendship with my father in the 'Seventies and 'Eighties, and wrote down the following comments for this memoir:

"I well remember my friend, Steele MacKaye, soon after he came back from Europe,—his active mind teeming with ingenious ideas regarding stagecraft, wherein *he originated by his anticipating inventions the stage lighting and setting which, in later years, were utilised and amplified by Henry Irving, Beerbohm Tree, and Max Reinhardt. MacKaye was a genius, if there ever was one.* Highly resourceful and ingenious, full of pluck, he lived in a period when he was surrounded by jealous little men who, at the time, wrote presumptuous and rather prosaic 'reviews.' Some of these persons were densely ignorant and narrow minded, and failed to give MacKaye the credit he deserved for his more subtle work. In London, had he stayed there, his true managerial greatness would have been more fully appreciated. MacKaye seemed to belong to another world from that we occupied. 'Artistic' in dress, very handsome—his lively play of agreeable expression mirrored his remarkably intellectual and emotional variations. As I was then beginning my psychological work, I delighted in his society, which afforded me fruitful study."

BUILDING ANEW; DRAMATIC SCHOOL AND THEATRE

From this glimpse, as from other glimpses, we catch sight of the magnetic presence which drew to himself groups of young men animated by interests of psychology, art, sociology, drama, invention. With such men as his aids, he began once more to build, and—building with the souls of men—he builded in stuff more plastic and permanent than stone.

Among such young men, in 1883, Franklin Sargent now rallied others and himself to Steele MacKaye's long-maturing plans for establishing a National Conservatory of the Theatre's Art, with an experimental theatre for their practical application. These plans began to take shape, at first, in the rather modest form of a Dramatic School for amateur aspirants to the stage; but shortly—with my father's increasing absorption in the scheme—the conception

grew apace and became a strictly professional undertaking, with chief emphasis centered in the theatre—once more, though in modified form, his “dream theatre,” to become the excelling rival of his former playhouse on Twenty-fourth Street, in his battle with the Mallorys. In May of 1884, the earliest form of these plans was thus reported in a long article in the *Boston Herald*:

*“For the first time * in this country, a dramatic conservatory is to be established. This school of dramatic art will occupy a new, perfectly equipped theatre, with instruction in a wide range of studies from specialists in the highest rank.—A distinguished resident of New York, Mr. Steele MacKaye, has been for some time nursing a devotion to dramatic art, which he desired to put into practical form. His enthusiasm infected his friends and pupils. They said: ‘Let us build a theatre of our own, in which our ideas can be put into practice, with none to say us nay.’ So a company was formed, and two lots of land secured on Fourth Avenue, between 23rd and 24th Streets, just north of the National Academy of Design. The work of tearing down the buildings † which have occupied these two lots was begun May 1, and the *Lyceum Theatre* will be completed by November 1. The builders are Messrs. Herbert and Pirrson.‡ The architecture will be of the French Renaissance style, the front of brick, faced with stone. . . .*

A “CONSERVATORY” FOR NEW YORK; FRANK MILLET, WM. JAMES, WM. ROLFE, ETC.; “CHILDREN’S THEATRE,” DRAMATIC LIBRARY AND
“PROFESSIONAL TRY-OUT”

*“In the first year, the theatre will be rented for theatrical societies, concerts, lectures, etc., but not to professional theatrical companies. Plans are on foot for a series of children’s entertainments, operettas and pantomimes. But the chief end is the school. The New York Conservatory will have an advantage possessed by no similar institution, not even the Paris Conservatoire, and that is, the daily use of a theatre and stage, so that the pupils can literally ‘face the footlights.’ . . . The school will have seven or eight teachers, specialists, all of whom are artists. These include Mr. Steele MacKaye, his pupil, Mr. Franklin Sargent, and Mr. Frank Millet, who is very enthusiastic over the plans, which include lectures from Prof. William James of Harvard on physiological psychology, and from Dr. Dudley Sargent on physical training. Other lecturers will be Mr. Charles Barnard, of the *Century**

* The reader—glancing back to Chapter IV, with my father’s pamphlet, 1871, *A Free School of Dramatic Art*”; to Chapter V, his *First School of Expression*, 1875; to Chapter VI, his *Second School of Expression*,” 1877—may judge how glibly journalism is wont to overlook much earlier “first” undertakings, in its reports of the immediate present hour.

† One of these buildings, next to the Academy of Design, was the (second 4th-Ave.) shoe-shop of Bernard Saint-Gaudens (father of Augustus, the sculptor). He had sold shoes there from 1867 to 1884.

‡ Cf. on page i, 445, MacKaye’s address, “Office of F. Pirrson,” where Oscar Wilde called and wrote to him in Sept. ’82.

Magazine, Prof. Moses Coit Tyler, Messrs. William J. Rolfe and H. N. Hudson, and a lecture is expected from Mr. Henry Irving.—Among the Board of Visitors will be Augustin Daly, Joseph Jefferson and William Winter.—A letter from Régnier, director of the Théâtre Français at Paris, has warmly endorsed the undertaking. . . . Now that the Madison Square travelling companies reach every town in the Union, the taste for theatricals is becoming universal. 'During the last two years,' Mr. Sargent states 'more than two hundred amateurs have applied for instruction at the Madison Square.' . . . Mr. MacKaye's new plans for the Lyceum Theatre include a room for the Actor's Fund; a dramatic library established in a fireproof room; the bringing out of new plays for authors and actors, so that both may have opportunity of seeing their pieces 'tried on.' No such ambitious effort to impress art and science into the service of the stage has ever been witnessed in this country, and the whole will be given a distinctively American character."

Noteworthy in these plans of MacKaye are his pioneering proposals, in 1884, for a "Children's Theatre" and a "Professional Try-Out" for authors and managers—plans which, in very recent years, have been announced as "first" ventures in those fields. The potentialities of his plans were those of an institution of several departments—comparable to a college, with executives, lecturers, laboratories, complex equipment, etc.—the organising, building, launching of which might well have consumed three or four years. But things are not ordered after such leisured fashion on Broadway; and Broadway once more was laying its hectic compulsion upon Steele MacKaye, philosopher and teacher, to turn again organiser, raiser of capital, promoter, architect, inventor, director and dramatist, in order to launch a combined conservatory and professional theatre within ten months. Once more MacKaye accepted the challenge—and accomplished the result.

Within six weeks of the above announcement, the growing stature* of the undertaking had begun to involve a realignment of New York theatrical forces, through an important defection in the ranks of the Mallory contingent at the Madison Square, on the part of the Frohman brothers, first of Gustave, then of Daniel, to the new MacKaye arena of the Lyceum, and soon afterwards of

* "Shortly after the Union Square Theatre chair-installing time," my mother has written me, "Franklin Sargent besought your father to establish a dramatic school, in which Sargent and Gus Frohman (a brother of Dan and Charles) should be associated. A little theatre was to be built for the school, if your father would go into the plan. Your father consented, but at once took the whole matter into his own hands, induced Brent Good (of the Little Liver Pills, whom he had got hold of through his friend, Gordon) to back the theatre, which your father named the *Lyceum*, and a big scheme was soon in place of the first modest idea."

Charles—to new ventures of his own. In August, the dramatic press of New York was already agog over these new developments in the four years' battle of MacKaye to regain his leadership: a struggle which, at times, had appeared to be going so disastrously against him. On August 3, '84, the N. Y. World commented:

NEW LYCEUM THEATRE: "STEEL-NERVED MACKAYE TO THE FRONT AGAIN"

"Mr. Steele MacKaye comes to the front again with the New Lyceum Theatre, now in course of erection on Fourth Avenue. This naturally creates great interest in theatrical circles, for it was Mr. MacKaye's original and constructive genius which conceived and carried to success the unique scheme of the Madison Square Theatre. His *Hazel Kirke*, a triumph of stage discipline, his double stage and his whole working plan of that theatre gave it the momentum that kept it going, long before the management struck the good luck of Belasco's *May Blossom*. . . . An additional interest may be given to this project by the association of the Frohmans with MacKaye. All the parties have found it impossible to agree with the Mallorys, so it looks as if the Lyceum would be a determined rival of the Madison Square."

"Within a fortnight," stated the Morning Journal (Aug. 3), "the new Lyceum Conservatory will begin operations with its first class of one hundred pupils. At 18 West 23rd Street, the lower and second floors will be placed at their disposal. Mr. Steele MacKaye, the artistic director of the entire Lyceum enterprise, will assume complete control of all productions. The opening play, from his pen, is already more than half finished, and will be completed for rehearsal by the first of October."

"Mr. Charles McGeachy attends to the strictly-business portion of the Lyceum School.—'Mr. MacKaye,' said he, 'decides whether to admit an applicant or not; he notes where the candidate is defective, and thus informs his assistant, Mr. Sargent, where special attention in teaching is required.—The principal actors in the theatre will be *professionals, assisted by advance students in small parts.*'"

"THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON OF THE THEATRE"; BRIEF VACATION;
NATIONAL TOUR FOR PUPILS

Headed "*Steel-Nerved MacKaye*," another article commented:—"Mr. Steele MacKaye is a fearless pioneer. He makes a stage chair with his hands while he is thinking out a plot with his head, and invents an elevator stage in the interval between the madness of his heroine and her marriage. *He is the Admirable Crichton of the theatre.*—We hope he may soon attain for himself the success he has already achieved for others." "*Steele MacKaye*," wrote William Winter, in The Tribune (Aug. 23), "is buried in the breezy solitudes of Brighton Beach, at work on the last act of his new play, which will open the Lyceum."

On this brief vacation at the seaside my father wrote from Coney Island (August 19th) to my mother in Ridgefield, Conn. (where we boarded, that summer, at "Gregory's," Titacus):

"I am dreaming over my play, but not permitting myself to hold a pen. I am vegetating as well as my temperament will allow. How I wish you were all with me down here, by this sea-washed shore! Get well and strong, so that you can pile into the work with me, when the time comes."

How little his temperament would allow him to "vegetate" may be gathered from the reference (on page 457) by his pupil, Dr. Curry, to his lesson in expression on the sands of that "sea-washed shore." Other such lessons he was conveying on paper to another pupil, his son, Will (then fifteen), who was visiting the Monroes in Dublin, N. H., whence Will wrote to him (Aug. 16), forecasting subconsciously, in his "if I live," the tragedy of his early passing:

"Dear Father—May (Monroe) and I are longing to renew our lessons. We practise, every day, on a platform in the Cathedral Woods, overlooking Monadnock. . . . You write me: 'the rim is *definitive*, the palm is revelatory'; but what is the back of the hand? . . . I shall be as objective as a derby, when I come home: this morning I spent two hours on my spelling. . . . I do not think pleasure of any kind is ever substantial joy; nor do I think that a long life can be both pleasant and peaceful; for peace need not pass, but pleasure must pass; and we may tire of pleasure, but we cannot tire of peace.

"A substantial philosophy and a more substantial will: these, I think, and these only, can make the life of a sensitive and passionate soul peaceful. . . . O, I want to tell you that, although I may write plays, yet—if I live, and all goes comparatively well—I will also write at least one novel, for already I have ideas in my head, which must come out. . . . Your obedient servant, Will."

On September 9, '84, the N. Y. Morning Journal' wrote: "Mr. Steele MacKaye is staying at the Overlook House in the Catskills, finishing his new play."

On August 30th, the *Dramatic Times* had stated: "Franklin H. Sargent, of the Lyceum Theatre-School of Acting, is to make a tour of the principal cities, to examine applicants who cannot afford a journey to New York. The trip will include Chicago, St. Louis, Louisville, Cincinnati, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Albany and Boston, beginning Sept. 8th, with a stay of two days in each city."

EUGENE FIELD "TOUCHES OFF" "PROFESSOR" STEELE MACKAYE

This itinerary indicates the national scope of MacKaye's new school, the plans for which, when announced in Chicago, gave occasion (Sept. 10) for this skit-item on "Professor MacKaye," *et al.*, by Eugene Field, who was then a "columnist" on the Chicago News:

"Professor Steele MacKaye, with Professor Charles McGeachy, Professor Gustave Frohman, Professor Charles Frohman, and several other well-known dramatic patrons and instructors, has organised a college of dramatic art in New York, which will be devoted to the assiduous training of stage-struck people, male and female. . . . Besides Professor MacKaye—who will determine their qualifications for the hardships of a dramatic career—the following eminent talent composes the faculty: *Emeritus Professor of Diamonds*, Mme. F. Janauschek; *Shakspeare*, Professor George Edgar; *Divorce*, Professor Osmond Tearle; *Pedestrianism*, Professor Anna Dickinson; *Advertising*, Professor Mary Anderson; *Barn Storming*, Professor George C. Miln; *Hysteria*, Professor Clara Morris; *Moral Philosophy*, Professors Shook and Palmer; *Ancient History*, Professor Margaret Mitchell; *Minstrelsy*, Professor Charles Frohman; *Lungs*, Professor John McCullough; *Foreign Relations*, Professor Lawrence Barrett."

STOCK COMPANY VERSUS "COMBINATIONS"; NEW INVENTIONS:
A SLIDING STAGE

Another comment by an eminent American journalist was this editorial, in different mood, by Col. Henry Watterson, in his Louisville Courier-Journal (Sept. 14, '84):

"The new Lyceum Theatre in New York must appeal to every lover of histrionic art. The present system of 'combinations' has done much to deteriorate the actor's art in America by confining the actor to one character, thus failing to acquire that versatility which a constant change of characters gave under the old stock system. . . . The Lyceum is intended to supply the defects of the present system. It is a theatre with a dramatic school, in its main idea modelled after the Théâtre Français, which puts its novitiates through a long and careful training before they are allowed to appear before the public. . . . Mr. MacKaye, a genius in mechanics, will put into the theatre several of his own inventions for the comfort of both actors and public. Among other things, he has invented a *sliding stage*."

"BACK FROM ELBA," "NAPOLEON" MACKAYE'S NEW IDEAS
CONFRONT HIS OLD

It was now nearly four years since MacKaye had been "banished" from theatrical power in New York, and now *The Spirit of the Times* thus hailed him back in the rôle of a dramatic Napoleon, from "his exile to the theatrical Elba":

"The new Lyceum Theatre has brought forth Steele MacKaye, who is larger than the Lyceum and greater than the project of a dramatic school.—He is to be the manager of the new house, with Gustave Frohman as his business lieutenant, and Franklin Sargent to assist him in the educational department. In other words, here is an opposition to the Madison Square, with a handsome little theatre nearly ready, a

Frohman in the business management and another *Hazel Kirke* in manuscript. We hope that the articles of agreement are all right, *this* time, with no super-Shylockian condition of two hundred pounds of flesh in the bond, in case Antonio MacKaye's venture is unfortunate! . . . The new theatre is to seat 800 persons—say \$1,100.—MacKaye's patent safety chairs, improved and amended, are to be installed, with a dozen new devices, which Mr. MacKaye has invented *during his exile to the theatrical Elba*. We are promised a *sliding stage*, which is to surpass the elevator stage in economy of money, if not of time, and a *new system of ventilation*.

"Now his own creations—Lyceum and Madison Square—are to confront each other, and spread their rival influences throughout America. *The whole country will be a battle ground between Steele MacKaye's new ideas and his old ideas*. May the best win!—Yet, whether MacKaye or Mallory ultimately triumphs, the public are sure to be the gainers. Two such theatres as the Madison Square are better than one. The roses of York and Lancaster may bloom beautifully together in the same dramatic garden."

In the above excerpts, the allusion to "a sliding stage" is worthy of note. At this date, in 1884, my father had already invented such a stage and intended to make it a structural part of his Lyceum Theatre. Sufficient capital, however, was not forthcoming, and it was not introduced there. I have not made research at Washington to discover whether it was patented, as stated in contemporary newspapers.* In any event—put aside in my father's mind—it may have been the initial form suggestive for those complex, interactive, sliding stages which, eight years later, he patented and utilised as structural parts of his Spectatorium, in Chicago.

"SECESSION FROM THE MALLORY HIERARCHY"; "WAR OF THE RED AND WHITE ROSES"

The return of "Napoleon MacKaye from the theatrical Elba" struck dismay into the Mallory dynasty and caused, very soon, a veritable rout of their chief lieutenants into the opposing camp. In a letter to my mother, my father wrote:

"All business details have been closed, and I am to have the untrammelled direction of the new theatre . . . a good opening at last! Pray God I may have the health and strength to make the most of it. . . . Dr. Mallory † is powerless to harm us now. He will arrive

* The Boston Herald, Oct. 25, 1884, stated: "When the Lyceum Theatre comes to be opened, it will contain no less than twenty-two inventions, all of which are now being patented by Mr. MacKaye."

† Troubled by the impending competition of the Lyceum with the Madison Square, and by the defections in his own régime at the latter house, Dr. Mallory had gone to London, to secure distinguished recruits for his own forces. Among others he sought to secure Beerbohm Tree and bring him from London

from England next Monday, to find his whole organisation rebellious at his return, and ready to leave him at a moment's notice, if he tries any of his usual tactics."

This warlike situation is further revealed by the following three press items (News Letter, Aug. 9; Wm. Winter, in the Tribune, Aug. 25; and Morning Journal, Aug. 28, '84):

(1) "The secession of Mr. Gustave Frohman and Mr. Franklin H. Sargent from the hierarchy of the Madison Square Theatre, and the immediately subsequent pronouncement of their association with Mr. Steele MacKaye, at the new Lyceum Theatre, has furnished no end of surprise and the chief topic in theatrical circles." (2) "No one knows better than Marshall H. Mallory, who represents Dr. Mallory and himself, the value to any theatrical enterprise of Steele MacKaye; and no wonder these Madison Square proprietors regard the establishment of his Lyceum as extremely dangerous to their interests. *It is now stated that the Mallorys will dispose of a half interest in the Madison Square Theatre to Mr. A. M. Palmer.*" (3) "The Mallorys, who are two pretty sharp and cunning little Christians, are growing panicky at the growing importance of the new Lyceum Theatre, as a rival of the Madison Square, of which the original genius was Steele MacKaye. The result appears to be a war of the Red and the White Roses."

MALLORY "SPY" AT REHEARSALS OF GILLETTE'S *PRIVATE SECRETARY*

Intermingled with this "War of the Roses," William Gillette, who also had left the Madison Square, was now having his "own riot" with the Mallorys, with reference to his play *The Private Secretary*, a version made by him of a German play, *Der Bibliotheker*. Having bought another version of that play, the Mallorys, who were rushing to produce theirs at the Madison Square, threatened Gillette with an injunction, if he should play his own version, which he was then rehearsing for production at the Comedy Theatre. As part of their strategies, the Mallorys were reported to have hired "a young man" in Gillette's own company to act as a spy at his rehearsals. Having discovered the spy—the sequel was thus reported by the Boston Herald (Sept. 28):

"'Young man,' said Mr. Gillette, 'you are in the wrong theatre; your place is at the Madison Square. Go down there, and tell the manage-

to New York. Beerholm Tree's statement of the conditions upon which he would accept Dr. Mallory's invitation and come to America, written in a letter to "Edwin Low, Esq.," are among the materials of this memoir. *On returning to New York, however, Dr. Mallory found the opposing MacKaye forces so strongly embattled, that he immediately sought to strengthen his own by the accession of A. M. Palmer.* This new arrangement probably prevented the call of Beerholm Tree to America.

ment I sent you with my compliments.' And the young man was immediately removed from the cast. Then Mr. Gillette sent a sarcastic message to Mr. Mallory to the effect that, since he apparently wanted to know all he possibly could about the rehearsals at the Comedy Theatre, he would be quite welcome to come up there in person and sit through the last dress rehearsal. Of course, nobody dreamed that Mallory would have the nerve to accept such an invitation, but he did, and yesterday he spent the entire morning at the Comedy Theatre, with his eyes fixed on the actors in Mr. Gillette's piece. At the close he said it was pretty good and he enjoyed it. So Mr. Gillette is now advertising that Mr. Mallory is extremely pleased with Gillette's version of *The Private Secretary!*"

"Last night, for the first time in the history of the Madison Square Theatre," wrote the New York Tribune (Monday, Sept. 29th), "a rehearsal was held on a *Sunday* night—in the management's hurry to outdo Gillette at the Comedy."

On the afternoon of the opening of Gillette's play, a reporter (of the Commercial Advertiser) interviewed Gillette at the Comedy Theatre:

"Is the Mallory injunction likely to occur to-night when your play is in progress?" asked the reporter.

"Well," answered Mr. Gillette, "that depends upon the meanness of the man."

Meantime, as certain rumours from the Madison Square had sought to entangle Gillette's play in the "war of the Red and White Roses," this note (Sept. 22, '84) appeared in The New York Mirror, addressed to the editor:

"Dear Sir: On behalf of the Lyceum Management, permit me to contradict the report of their connection with Mr. Gillette's adaptation of *The Private Secretary* at the Comedy Theatre.—Respectfully, Steele MacKaye."

"MACKAYE'S REVENGE"; "A SCHOOL OF PENANCE FOR THE MALLORYS"

Of this general belligerent situation The New York Dispatch wrote, under caption of "Steele MacKaye's Revenge":

"Steele MacKaye is a great strategist. He is on the eve of a great victory, or a disastrous failure—as a manager. He has the Frohmans as his aides and lieutenants. . . . He was banished from the Madison Square, where the Mallorys triumphed, and the lawyers had a bonanza—a harvest of shekels from the belligerents. But now MacKaye bobs up serenely from his header—director-in-chief, boss, cook and brains of the new Lyceum and its school of instruction.

"Here, we prophesy, will come MacKaye's revenge. *This school of instruction will be a School of Penance for the Mallorys.* In MacKaye's theatre there will be noiseless ushers, an aerial orchestra, patent ventilation, all the Madison Square features outdone by additional improvements of his busy and inventive brain. Revenge is sweet, and in the end Palmer will disagree with the Mallorys; then will come quarrels, separation; Palmer will buy out the Mallorys, and the 'Churchmen' will at last be banished from the Tabernacle of the Double-Stage!"

PALMER, JOINING MALLORYS, ULTIMATELY FORCES THEM FROM THE FIELD

This journalistic prophecy was indeed largely fulfilled. For, under stress of the growing defections, caused by the return of MacKaye at the head of his new theatre, the Mallorys decided to stem the rout against them by amalgamating their forces with those of their old competitor and rival, A. M. Palmer, and this union was forthwith consummated, by appointing Palmer director of the Madison Square, with a half interest in the theatre. Thus Palmer became General of the Mallory forces on the field of combat. And so this step, taken at the moment as a rather desperate remedy, led before long to the definite retirement of the Mallorys from the theatrical lists, for Palmer soon became the head and front of the Madison Square régime.*

Thus, also—though of course the Mallorys lost thereby none of their legal holdings in the fortune accrued and accruing from *Hazel Kirke*, and though MacKaye's régime at the Lyceum was shortly to pass from his hands, to the personal profit of all the chief lieutenants who had followed him there, though not of himself, their leader, yet—Steele MacKaye had at last the strategic satisfaction of having outmanœuvred his opponents of *The Churchman*, eliminating them ere long wholly from the theatrical field, in which he himself moved on to other and different triumphs and distinctions. At the time, after his four years' painful exile of "Elba," that out-generalizing "revenge" had possibly its proverbial tinge of "sweetness," yet—being quite out of keeping with his own nature to harbour any rancour—he soon forgot it, for more creative considerations.

ROUT OF MALLORY CAMP; FROHMANS, BELASCO, SISSON, ETC., COME
OVER TO MACKAYE

But now, in the autumn of '84, the disintegration of his oppo-

* Later, when Palmer left the Madison Square and took Wallack's theatre, Charles H. Hoyt, writer of popular farces, bought the Madison Square Theatre, which was finally torn down about 1904.

nents' camp became an utter rout of the Madison Square. On Sept. 20th, an article in *Music and Drama* stated:

"Daniel Frohman of the Madison Square is shortly to become connected with the Lyceum. I shouldn't be surprised if Charlie split away too. Nelson Waldron, of the Madison Square, is engaged as machinist of the Lyceum. When their contracts are out, Wesley Sisson, David Belasco and Tom Grosman will certainly go there. Sadie Martinot, the best comedienne on the stage to-day, has signed with MacKaye at the Lyceum. Negotiations are on with William Terriss, formerly with Henry Irving and now leading man for Mary Anderson. Mme. Modjeska will play there next year, and Tommaso Salvini is rumoured as an accession. Steele MacKaye himself has offered Belasco the position of his stage manager, whenever Belasco will accept it."

"At 12 o'clock last night," wrote the New York correspondent of the *San Francisco Music and Drama* (Sept. 13, '84): "I called in at No. 18 West 23rd Street, where Gus Frohman, his brother Charlie and Steele MacKaye were in earnest confab, and when I left at one o'clock, they were still in conference. I foretell that nearly everybody at the Madison Square, perhaps even Charlie Frohman, will shortly become connected with MacKaye's new theatre. . . . Dave Belasco, whose Madison Square contract extends over another season, has become disconsolate at the aspect of affairs there. In connection with Belasco and MacKaye, a prominent actor remarked to me: 'If MacKaye and Belasco were to write a play together, what a play it would be!' And that made me think of the possible 'great American drama.' *

"Mr. Benson, of San Francisco, by the way, recently gave a Delmonico dinner to Steele MacKaye."

Six weeks later The New York Times wrote:

"MacKaye, Frohman, Sisson, Belasco, Grosman, Roberts, MacGeachy, and all of the bookkeepers and stenographers of the new Lyceum are from the Madison Square. In fact, there are almost no members of the old staff of the Madison Square left in the employ of the Messrs. Mallory."

BELASCO REMINISCES OF MACKAYE, "THE MASTER OF HIS FELLOWS"

The above allusions to David Belasco, near the beginning of his first personal acquaintance with my father, are pertinent to some statements of his concerning Steele MacKaye, which he has made

* The N. Y. Journal wrote, at about this time: "These American writers—Steele MacKaye, Bronson Howard, Augustin Daly, Edgar Fawcett, David Belasco, Henry de Mille, have proved to American managers that American plays pay better than English plays, while *The London Gentleman* predicts that the English playwrights will soon borrow as much from the American as from the French stage."

many years after the events recorded in this chapter. For this memoir Mr. Belasco himself has written:

"The genius of Steele MacKaye imparted a rare quality to all that he did for the development of the American stage. His accomplishments bore the mark of unusual artistry. In many ways he was the master of his fellows and one could not be associated with him, without profit. His visions were very clear to him, and their fulfilment often came before his associates had an understanding of what he really meant. He lived to see his theories put to practical use by men who did not believe in them at first.

*"My personal relations with Mr. MacKaye were very human. We worked together, we agreed, we disagreed; but my respect and admiration for the man and for his ideas, his teachings, his actual work, above all for his genius, has never grown less. Steele MacKaye's influence will be felt long after the work of other men of his time, who may have seemed equally gifted, has been forgotten. He was a unique figure in the dramatic world and, were he alive to-day, the laurels which were so begrudgingly given to him would be heaped at his feet in gratitude and deep appreciation." **

In New York, at Mr. Belasco's friendly invitation, I spent several hours with him one evening, at his office in the Belasco theatre, where he recounted to me, with extraordinary vividness, many interesting recollections of my father. On that occasion (April 7, 1925), Mr. Thomas A. Curry, his secretary, was also present, and I recorded parts of Mr. Belasco's personal account in notes,[†] from which I quote here the following:

"As I have told you," said Mr. Belasco, "it was through your father that I first came east from San Francisco to New York City. There I first met him. William Winter introduced me to him at a club—the Lotus Club.

COMPARING BAD CONTRACTS; "‘YOU LACK PATIENCE’";
"I WAS HIS DOG"

"‘Come upstairs,’ said your father, so I followed him up and we sat in the library and talked together, and I told him how I had produced his play *Won at Last* in San Francisco—about the baby and the baby clothes in the play, and how effective that piece of business had proven there. We talked about the stage arrangements, how I had mounted

* Again, on Oct. 13, 1924, Mr. Belasco wrote to me, in a letter:—"Dear Percy MacKaye—There is so much that I can tell you about your father, and much of his work, that I could not write it all in a letter. I was in very close touch with him when I was at the Madison Square Theatre, and had high regard for his genius and affection for him as a man; and I am sure there is much that I could tell you about which you were too young to know of."

[†] Quoted also on pages i: 262, 394, 443; and ii, 55, 56.

the scenes, etc. Then he said to me, 'I have got something much better back here!' striking his forehead. 'That Madison Square was just a toy in comparison. I had trouble there. I understand *you* have a wonderful contract. Yes?' and he smiled. (Well, I *had* a wonderful contract—an *infernal* contract!)

"'I know about yours, Mr. MacKaye,' I said. 'As to mine—yes: they own me, body and soul, for \$35 a week. They get paid for my services.'

"'Well,' he answered, 'we are two damn fools. We need a business manager apiece. I didn't even read my contract. I was dreaming of my double stage. They said, "Steele MacKaye, you have genius. Here is plenty of money. Go ahead." Well, now I am out of the Madison Square. That is done. I am teaching now for \$20 an hour.'

"He had speakers, statesmen, actors and actresses, people who came to him from all parts of the country to learn diction, manners, poetry of motion—the wave of the hand. When he found a prize pupil he would grow very absorbed and forget all about the other pupils who were waiting. . . . Occasionally, about that time, I would sit in the Madison Square park, opposite the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and I would see him prowling around there near that theatre of his dreams and inventions. He seemed to haunt that place, yearning to recover his child. He would snap his teeth together—grow white. . . . Well, around that time, I saw much of him. I was his dog. He tried out all sorts of ideas and plans on me. He would sit me down and tell me a dozen plots. 'Why don't you finish this?' I would stop and ask him. But there was too great an exuberance of ideas and his mind was already working.

"HE WAS LIKE A GOD"; "RESIGN"; "A PIECE OF PIE—AND TO WORK!"

"*Your father was a volcano.* Yet at times he was as tender as a child. Always he was giving from his pocket—right and left—often to those who came to pick it. *He was an institution—a national figure. He appealed by the scope of his ideas to all countries. In coming to New York, I was like a sponge. I absorbed all that he said and looked and radiated. I was a stranger from the Far West. To me he was like a god.*

"He had to have some one now to assist him; so he exclaimed to me—still thinking of those Mallorys and how they had treated him: 'I'll get even: I will build a theatre of my own. I am taking a site on Fourth Avenue. The Tiffany Company are interested.' . . . Well, I (David Belasco) was getting disgusted with the Madison Square churchmen. Your father appealed to me because we were both up in the air. So I was ready to follow him in his new venture. . . . *He gave me a piece of pie and took me in a room and said, 'Now, to work!'* . . . He did not have any money, nor did I. I got \$35 a week from the Mallorys. For that I had to sit up all night and tinker plays. Then your father said:

"I'll tell you what we will do now, David; you're sick and tired of 'em. So am I. We will put the first spade in the ground. There is Franklin Sargent, a pupil of mine. I have worked and educated him—

to carry out the great dream of my ideal. He is with me in this. Resign, and we will open a school.'

"'Do what?' said I.

"'Resign. We will have the great Conservatoire. I shall write the plays—direct the theatre; you shall be the stage manager.'

"I hesitated a little. 'You won't—er—you won't come in and upset my work too much?'

"'No indeed. I won't interfere. We will have a great art theatre, and won't depend on men with a big pocket book.'

"So your father goes ahead and he engages a whole building without a cent. He gets Tiffany to supply \$50,000 worth of decorations for a share in the stock. So we enter our new quarters.

"'Now, David,' said your father, 'we have all got to live—somehow.' (There we were: Steele Mackaye—Sargent—Belasco. There were three splendid large rooms.) 'Here, my good fellow,' he said to a workman, 'put his name there on that door—clear and large for everybody to see—"DAVID BELASCO": that's *his* room.'

"So your father started his great school, with 300 enthusiastic pupils. A wonderful start! Then happened the usual thing. The backers began to get uneasy. De Forest had charge of Tiffany's, who had made the arrangements with your father. Brent Good also was interested. He was rich—made Carter's Little Liver Pills. Then came worry—like putting a corkscrew in your body. . . . Steele MacKaye, well, you know his temperament. He was terribly busy, overworked.* For the school of acting great quantities of fine carpets and furniture had been supplied; but it was difficult to get money. We discussed my salary. 'Your salary, David? \$150 a week, that's your salary. But that's only a start, my boy!' He meant well, I know that. But we were *all* short on salaries. So, unbeknownst to him, I had two or three little pupils on the side, to keep me going."

EMMA SHERIDAN (FRY): "A FLARE OF TRUMPETS—A GREAT HANDCLASP!"

Among the pupils in the Lyceum School was Gen. George A. Sheridan's daughter, Emma Sheridan, who, years later, continued some phases of the work, begun under my father's direction, in a later school of her own. As Emma Sheridan Fry, Dramatic Director of the Educational Players, New York, she wrote to me (Oct. 15, 1917) concerning Steele MacKaye:

"Your resplendent father! He was a flare of trumpets—the billowing of a banner—a great handclasp! He and my father were devoted

* "Mr. Steele MacKaye," wrote the N. Y. World (Jan. 18, '85), "was caught on the jump. He cracked all the fingers on the reporter's hand with a Delsarte grip, and said:—'I am glad you have looked at the school. At the Lyceum Theatre we have put up a temporary stage in what will eventually be the school room. We hope to give New York one of the most perfectly organised. . . .'—With that, Mr. MacKaye was pulled four ways at once by as many men, and disappeared amid a group who had plans to submit."

friends through many financial catastrophes,* out of which they enthusiastically pulled each other. . . . My interest in the stage was then yeasting, and I besought my father to induce the great Mr. MacKaye to teach me a little. Before arrangements could be consummated, Mr. MacKaye established the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, then his Lyceum Theatre-School, so I was put into his school. Ere long my father left for Australia. . . . Calamities followed, and I found myself without resources, with my mother to take care of.

"In this tragic emergency, my desperate brain conceived the idea that, possibly, your father might have in trust for me the \$500 fee for my tuition with him, so I sought an interview, and was received in his most august office at the Lyceum School. How big he looked, swarthy and flashing! I stumbled through my explanation, agonised by protesting pride. Your father hardly let me finish. 'My child, my dear child!' His big hand clasped mine, and his great voice rumbled benediction. I felt every trouble lifted and cancelled.

"Then he went on, radiating utmost kindness, while he spoke catastrophe: 'Your beloved father never paid me anything. I couldn't have taken it from him anyhow. I put you in the school because you are going to make a splendid career. Meanwhile—' for I suppose he saw my face fall, 'the career won't help you feed your mother, now, will it?' Then he continued—while he searched boxes and opened many small drawers, pulling from somewhere a roll of bills: 'But, here, bless your dear heart, I have got just \$26—' And he began pushing it on me: 'All! It will help a little. Nonsense, of course you must take it. Many a time I would have been hungry except for your father.' . . . The end of the interview is a haze. I know he wept and shook an angry finger at me, and denounced my rank ingratitude; for, of course, I could not take the money; but, as you see, he gave me something much more priceless—warm in my heart now—a memory of his big kindness. I am glad to speak to you thus, as your wonderful father's son. I am sure there are many in the world who greet you with affection for *his* sake, whenever occasion lets them." †

JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY—"MY SINCEREST RESPECT"

In 1884, Steele MacKaye's new school was looked to eagerly not only as a school for young men of talent, but as the door of a new opportunity for women, in high-grade professional work, on the part of many who had never before thought of the stage. Of hundreds of letters concerning such women applicants, this letter from a distinguished American poet of the time is characteristic:

* These concerned the car-coupler and theatre-chair inventions.

† These closing words of Mrs. Fry record a motive of this memoir. Very true it is that, during my own career in the theatre, I have met with tokens of warm friendship from members of the profession, and from elsewhere, on account of my being my father's son; and for such in particular, I have written this chronicle, to recall for them his personality and works.

"The Pilot Editorial Rooms, Oct. 7, 1884.

"Dear Mr. MacKaye: Because I am aware of your great kindness to Miss . . . of Bridgewater, I take the liberty of writing you concerning one of the rarest, most interesting minds I have ever met. I cannot express to you my deep gratification at knowing that now a door is at last before her, leading to a larger, happier future than she could ever hope for in a New England country town. I beg to offer you my sincerest respect.—*John Boyle O'Reilly.*"

On October 3, '84, the Lyceum Theatre-School * was formally opened, at 18 West 23rd Street. On that occasion, Steele MacKaye addressed the assembled pupils with a speech of welcome, in which he said:

MACKAYE ADDRESSES HIS SCHOOL: "DON'T BE AFRAID OF
GEESE OR SNAKES"

"It is not your desire to appear before the public that is going to make you artists. The only thing to make you artists is a desire to know your art:—nothing else. *When you can forget yourself in your art you will have lost your worst enemy.* . . . Bear in mind that upon you rests the dignity of beginning, with us, a movement which we believe will do more to ennoble this art, and to secure for it a place over all the other arts and institutions in the civilised world, than any movement that has thus far been initiated.

"Don't be afraid of time. There are many years before you. One of the greatest dramatic artists didn't begin till he was forty-two. . . . *Don't be afraid of hisses.* In England, there appeared an actress who was hissed from the stage, and she returned in two or three years, and was welcomed like an empress. That actress was Mrs. Siddons. There are only two creatures in the animal world that hiss: they are the snake and the goose. *In life, the people who hiss are either snakes or geese. We smile at the goose and pass by on the other side, and we let the snake sneak into the grass.*" †

Concerning this School of the Theatre, my mother has written to me, in her recollections:

"The working scheme and organisation of the Lyceum Theatre-School were entirely your father's. He selected and appointed the teachers, among them, David Belasco.

"The School was a tremendous success from the start. All the competent pupils that could be provided for were taken, but there were hundreds more beating at the gates. If your father then could only

* On Oct. 25, '84, the Boston Herald stated: "There are just 100 pupils at work now in the Lyceum Theatre-School. One class is rehearsing *Julius Caesar*, which will later be brought out with splendid stage settings and a carefully drilled company. There are no star performers, as the object is a remarkable ensemble." † Cf. also page i, 80.

have given his full attention to his school, he could have made not only a great fortune for himself, but a nucleus for the endowed theatre of his great desire; for people of exceptional culture, wealth and character were eager to be his pupils and to follow his leadership in any direction. But the enormous multiplicity of his duties involved in the theatre, its building, designing and business organising—devising, testing and manufacturing his inventions, writing his play and drilling the company, principals and supers, etc., all within a few months—prevented him from giving sufficient time to the school, which thus passed into other hands.”

WINTER, MCCULLOUGH AND MACKAYE—AT DELMONICO'S

About a week after the opening of his dramatic school, we may catch a contemporary glimpse of Steele MacKaye, etched with two other notable figures of that epoch, in this excerpt of an article (Oct. 12, '84), which gives a last vista of John McCullough, on the eve of his final break up—the pathetic madness from which he died about a year later:

“In the hallway of Delmonico's this evening, a short thin, timid-looking individual, with much hair and a very intelligent face stood irresolutely on the threshold. Presently a very pale, beardless man, sturdily built, dressed in mixed cloth, left his seat at a table, came forward, and greeted the other cordially. The two then went to the table where the second man had been sitting with a third, and soon all three, returning together, after a short talk, left the building.

“The first mentioned was Willy Winter, critic, author and poet. The second was John McCullough, the much-talked-of tragedian. The third was Steele MacKaye, genius, dramatic author and manager. *It would be impossible to find in this great city three men more generally known*, three warmer friends, or three more dissimilar individualities. Winter is all sentiment, McCullough is two-thirds sentiment, MacKaye is one-half sentiment. Than Winter there are critical writers more piquant, more sturdy, but none better informed, none more graceful. He is about fifty years old, and was born in Massachusetts.

“Steele MacKaye looms high above the dramatic horizon. He is a curious fellow, as full of genius as an egg is of meat. His pre-eminent trait is enthusiasm. His play is the best, his company the strongest, his theatre the most charming, his wife the most beautiful, his children the greatest wonders. I have known him in the flush of pecuniary income, when money rolled from him as from a broken casket. I have known him forced to scrape his financial cuticle on the oyster-beds of impecuniosity; and I desire to testify that he is one to whom wealth brings no added lustre, from whom poverty takes no single strain of manhood. If it were not for MacKaye the plethoric wallets of the Mallorys would be many thousands poorer, and the newly founded Lyceum School would be but a thing of imagination. *Hazel Kirke*, now past its thousandth performance, bears in its characters scores of apt

illustrations of its author's habit of mind. In the Madison Square MacKaye created perhaps the most charming playhouse in the English-speaking world.

"Well, these two men, MacKaye and Winter, went out with McCullough, one on either side of him. Though McCullough was pale and very thin, his eye was much clearer, his bearing manlier than when he left here for Hot Springs. No more thoughtful mind, no more open palm, no more considerate man than John McCullough ever walked the face of the earth. MacKaye and Winter stand near him; they understand his enfeebled condition and his needs; upon them rests the future of McCullough. . . . By the way, in New York, another friend of MacKaye, Henry E. Dixey, is all the rage."

"DIXEY ALL THE RAGE"; "ADONIS"; "ENGLISH, YOU KNOW!" AND
"T-T-WENTY YEARS AGO"

The performance of Dixey, "all the rage" at that time, was his inimitable *Adonis*, wherein—to his amazing caricature of Irving as *Hamlet*—Dixey sang a song, wafted to be sung on every street corner:



"Oh, the queer things we see and the queer things we do
Are English, you know, quite English, you know;
So away with your critics and Hamlets too—too—
It's English, quite English, you know!"

A sketch from memory of Dixey thus imitating Irving as *Hamlet*, herewith reproduced, was drawn, in 1885 by my brother Will. Dixey's imitation, though comic, was so aptly characteristic, in

voice, stuttered intonation, walk, and gesture, that it shared—even in burlesque—somewhat of the distinctive spirit and art of its distinguished original.

I remember my delight, as a boy, in the unique production—the romance of the Greek statue come to life in the youthful, abounding charm of Dixey himself. Therein his grace and light agility as a dancer were felicitously an expression both of his facetious drollery as a comedian and of his miming genius as an actor of song. Though his enormously popular success had elements of burlesque, humour and mimicry, his dominant part preserved a plane of fine art rarely associated with popular “take-offs.”

An impression of Irving’s acting in another rôle my brother Will wrote to a boyhood friend * in a letter, from which I quote this excerpt, for its contemporary record of how Irving’s stage mannerisms struck a droll-fancied boy of fifteen, who was already deeply engrossed in the laws of “harmonic gymnastics” in preparation for his stage career:

(Mt. Vernon, Feb. 8, '84): “Dear Apollo—I went to see Irving in *Charles I* by W. G. Wills, at Wallack’s old theatre, now called the Star. It was the first time I had seen either man or play. I was very much pleased with both; only it must be said that he (the man) has not much more grace than a broken saw-horse. Never have I seen mortal manage his legs as he did. It was wonderful! It seemed as if the soles of his boots were of steel and he walked on a magnet floor. And the awkwardness of his upper half was nearly equal to that of his legs. Apart from this, he spoke in a deep bass voice, and placed a period after each word. Yet, in spite of these misfortunes, he expressed the sentiment admirably and made himself appear like a living character.”

In *Adonis*, a frankly grotesque feature of the production was Dixey’s imitation of C. W. Couldock as the old blind *Dunstan* in *Hazel Kirke*, groping with hoarse ranting of “T-t-wen-ty ye-ears ago!” for his long-lost daughter, *Hazel*—who was impersonated by the tearfully wistful “three-hundred-pounder,” Miss Amelia Somerville, at whom sundry interruptive missiles were hurled from the stage wings. Thirty years later, the drollery and pantomimic charm of Dixey were romantic elements in the production of my play *A Thousand Years Ago*, in which he acted the chief rôle of *Capocomico*. Then, and often at the Players Club, he has told me of the quickening influence of Steele MacKaye, as comrade and teacher,

* This devoted friend (“Apollo”), Robert Eames Faulkner, of Keene, N. H., a gifted young poet—(Harvard, 1890)—upon my brother Will’s death, in '89, filled a brotherly place in our household of boys, with a charm of high-natured friendship which has endured lifelong.

upon his own acting career—a remembrance which he has recorded on page ii, 118, of this memoir.

MACKAYE PLANS "A SCHOOL FOR ENGLISH OPERA," 1884; JOHN LA FARGE'S LYCEUM SKETCHES; C. GRANT LA FARGE: "MACKAYE FAR AHEAD OF HIS DAY"

Apropos of *Adonis* and "the singing drama," this contemporary comment * records my father's advocacy of a school for "Opera in English," two generations before the present-day agitation in behalf of that slogan:

"The School for Actors, at the Lyceum, already has 160 pupils, who pay fees of \$200 each—\$32,000 for half a year's tuition.† This is decidedly better than a speculation in management. A theatre may not pay; a pupil must. *We believe that a great work has been quietly inaugurated by Steele MacKaye, who proposes that a School for English Opera be added to the curriculum of his school.* This idea is worthy of consideration, since the 'Pinafore' craze demonstrated that ten persons can learn to sing, while one person is learning to act."

In connection with the decoration of his Lyceum Theatre, my father had conferred with the eminent painter, John La Farge, whom he had known since boyhood, when at Newport he studied art with William Morris Hunt, who taught there also John La Farge. In 1925, his artist son, C. Grant La Farge, has written me these comments of his own concerning that time and circumstance:

"I recall your father, when he was in the midst of building his Lyceum Theatre, about the interior decorating of which he consulted my father, John La Farge. As assistant I got called into the scheme, and I can remember working on some sketches. We never got beyond the sketch stage; but I recall Mr. MacKaye's presence in my father's studio at 5 W. 10th St., as also my own youthful excitement at having work to do for Steele MacKaye and his theatre; for I have not forgotten how much he filled the public eye.

"In his fertile mind then there were definitely many things that have since won wide acclaim as significant developments of this later period. Strange it is to reflect that then we had a man, a native American,

* N. Y. *Dramatic Times*, Nov. 1, '84.

† How this large income was diverted from its intended purposes by very great mismanagement (with which Steele MacKaye had nothing to do), resulting in the retirement of one of the original associates, is a story whose intricacies would consume a chapter in itself. A complete detailed statement, given out by Steele MacKaye, was published in the N. Y. *Dramatic Times*, Sat., June 20, 1885, in a long signed article, headlined: "The Truth at Last: Mr. MacKaye tells the whole Story of the Lyceum Scheme."

brought up in the cultured atmosphere that should surround every artist, who saw so far ahead of his day, and who met, in great measure, the fate that so often attends those whose vision leaps beyond their contemporaries. And as I gaze about upon the resounding activities of some of our spectacular figures, I wonder whether, if Steele MacKaye were here, we should appreciate his civilisation, or fail to—because of the glamour of trans-oceanic *cachet*!”

Steele MacKaye's plans with John La Farge did not then progress beyond those preliminary sketches, for the reason that more immediately advantageous business arrangements were made with another old friend and fellow student of his, Louis C. Tiffany, who undertook the Lyceum decorations for a share of stock in the theatre—thus giving Tiffany his first large scale opportunity to provide, in harmony with my father's designs for his new theatre, some beautiful examples of his since famous glass work. Concerning this Mr. Louis Tiffany himself has written me (in 1926):

“Studying as I did, under George Inness, doubtless this early association of ours led your father to come to me when he was building his Lyceum and Madison Square Theatres. I was very happy in the opportunity to plan and work out with him the theatre decorations and curtains, because in our early friendship we found much in common in our art interests and in things that appealed to us. *This was also the first undertaking on so large a scale in my decorative activities and glass work, in which I then took particular pride.*”

During the autumn, winter and early spring of 1884-'85, while building his theatre, and launching his dramatic school, my father was also busy with his many inventions and their promoting companies.*

THOMAS EDISON, 1925, RECALLS “PRODIGIOUS IMAGINATION” OF “EDISON OF THE THEATRE”; HIS LETTERS TO “FRIEND MACKAYE,” 1884

Because of the celebrity of these and earlier inventions, MacKaye's name as an inventor was then often linked with that of his famous friend, Thomas A. Edison, in public comments calling him “the Edison of the theatre,” such as this item at the time:

“What Edison is to electricity, Steele MacKaye is to theatricals, and henceforth the Lyceum Theatre will be the Menlo Park of the profession.”

* Among my father's papers is a many-weeks' correspondence with George Ward Nichols, who installed the MacKaye theatre-chair in the Cincinnati Chamber of Music, of which Nichols was then President. In earlier years, as a New York critic of music and art, Nichols had once been engaged to my father's sister, Saidie. Cf. references to him in her diary, on pages i, 80, 82, etc.

Indeed, Steele MacKaye's theatre itself is associated with an historic achievement of Edison in theatrical annals; for, by MacKaye's design and initiative, his Lyceum was *the first theatre in New York City to be lighted by electricity* (both for stage effects and for the auditorium); and Mr. Edison has recently written me (1925) that he himself personally superintended, with my father, the installation there of his lighting system.* Under letterhead of "Thomas A. Edison, No. 65 Fifth Avenue, New York," he wrote to my father, in the autumn or winter of 1884, the following two notes (undated):

"Friend MacKaye—Impossible for me to come to the dinner to-night. Saturday I do the conservative citizen act by taking my family to alleged theatres. Is not this bearing the cross? I have six calcium lamps of 500 C. Power each. They were not made properly to get a good focus. I went over to lamp factory Thursday and explained exactly what I wanted. Will try those I have Monday.—Yours, *Edison.*"

"Friend MacKaye; Those Lamps I had are not *focusable*: Expect the good ones Wednesday or Friday. Will let you know when ready.—*Edison.*"

During that period of work together, my father and Edison became warm friends and frequent companions, in a mutual regard which led to occasional get-togethers during the remainder of my father's life.† On May 6, 1915, at Carnegie Hall, New York, the League for Political Education presented to Edison a gold medal for Distinguished Public Service. On that occasion, I read a poem ("The Planetary American," on the theme of his world-influencing inventions) which, seven years later, on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday (Feb. 11, 1922), I was invited to read again at his laboratory in Orange, New Jersey. On both occasions Mr. Edison reminisced to me concerning my father.

EDISON'S 75TH BIRTHDAY: "OLD CRONIES"—"GALILEO MACKAYE"

On the birthday occasion, a finely imaginative statue by Lorado Taft, symbolising Edison's invention of the phonograph, had just been presented to the inventor as a surprise to him—in presence of

* Referring to that time, Mr. Edison writes me in the same letter: "Your father had a prodigious imagination which attracted me. I saw him many times (two or three with William Winter, the critic). I think I first met him when he first came into my 65 Fifth Avenue office, to ask of the possibilities of electric lighting. My factory was at Menlo Park, N. J., and at Ave. B, N. Y. City. 65 Fifth Ave. was office of the Edison Electric light Co."

† See on page 9 (Prologue), concerning Edison's written "opinion" of MacKaye. Also note from him (1926), in Preface quoted on page ii, 310.

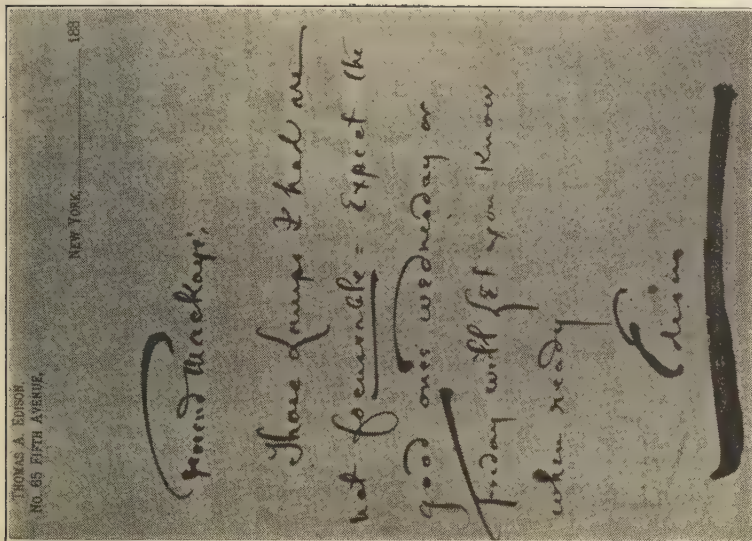


To Percy MacKaye

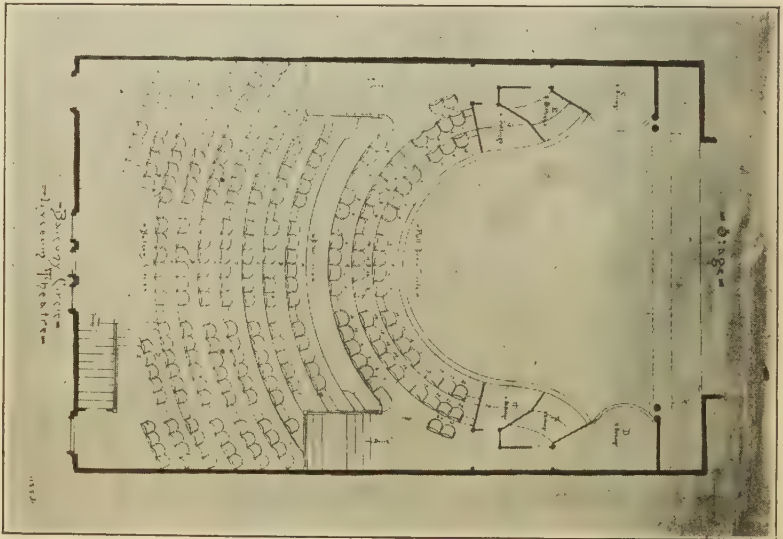
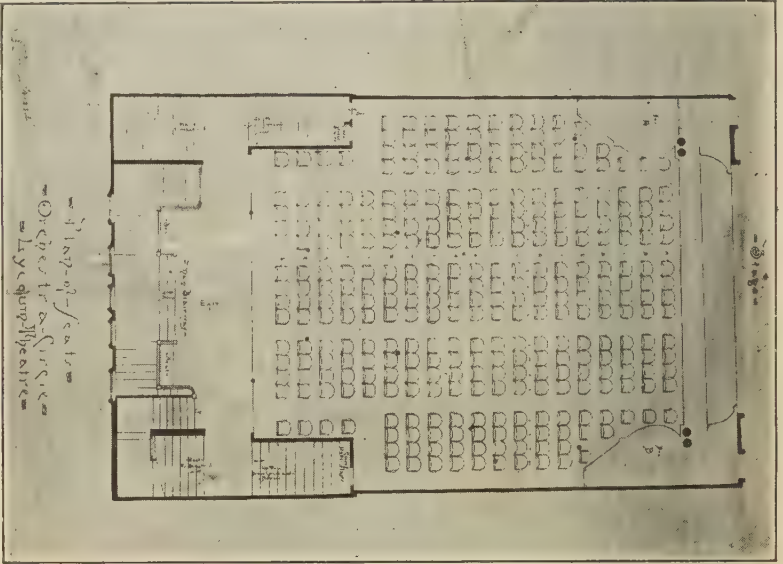
Thomas A. Edison.

THOMAS A. EDISON

On completing his invention of the first phonograph, 1888. From a photograph presented by him, on his 75th birthday, Feb. 11, 1922, to the son of his old friend, Steele MacKaye (pages 482, 484).



LETTER FROM THOMAS A. EDISON TO STEELE MACKAYE
(autumn or winter of 1884-'85) while installing his
lights in MacKaye's Lyceum Theatre, the first
electric-lighted theatre in New York.



PLAN OF SEATS, LYCEUM THEATRE

The plan (at left), downstairs, shows the arrangement of MacKay's patent chairs, in groups of four; each group folds up on a single standard, creating wide aisles for exit. (cf. Plate 61. Chap. XVII, Vol. Two.)

an informal gathering of eminent guests. While Mr. Edison was out at lunch with his "old guard" of associates, the heavy bronze statue had been unboxed and placed near his desk, so that, as he returned, unaware, he almost walked into it. Starting back, and scratching his dishevelled, thick, grey hair with one hand, he exclaimed: "Hello! How did that get here—by parcels post?" Then, after closely examining it, he turned, with his dry, genial Yankee smile, and said to Taft: "Fine! That's a real classic. But if you want these critic fellows to appreciate it, you ought to bury it and dig it up." Later, after the others had gone, Mr. Edison talked with me for a good while about my father, telling me how—at that Lyceum Theatre time—they used to get together by themselves, or with two or three "cronies," at a room in the old Ashland House,* where they would sit up nights, till near dawn, talking and talking.

"What did you talk about, Mr. Edison?" I asked.

"Talk about? Why, everything on the earth—inventions, art, the universe! Your father poured out ideas. He had too many ideas—too many, that is, to carry them all out. But he put 'em over, too—a whole lot of them. He was a real pioneer—a Galileo. . . . We used to talk about painting and painters—Rosa Bonheur. Your father studied with her in Paris. Her great canvas in the Metropolitan, the 'Horse-fair'—that's my favourite—large—imaginative. I like some recent modern sculpture—the 'Indian at the end of the trail'—that's fine; but most of this modern-day art is hideous, abnormal. . . . Imagination—that's the reality of art. Imagination—don't copy nature. What's the use? We have it all around us. Winslow Homer—he's the great fellow."

During this conversation, as a memento of our talk, Mr. Edison gave me a signed photograph of himself, taken in 1888, with his first phonograph, reproduced as an illustration in this chapter.

EDISON'S WORKSHOP, 1884: MACKAYE, IRVING, PORTER, "INSPECTORS"

On Friday, November 28, 1884, Edison had invited MacKaye to come with a party of friends, including Henry Irving,† to inspect

* On Feb. 11, 1927, Mr. Edison's 80th birthday, I conferred with him again at his home in Orange, N. J., where Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford were attending the occasion. My wife and I brought him a photo of the Lyceum Theatre, apropos of 1884-'85 days with my father.—"That man, MacKaye, could do 'most anything well," said Mr. Edison. We reminded him of the Old Ashland House. "Yes," he said, "and there was another hotel, too, where we'd get together: what *was* its name? (He paused, then chuckled:)—*Dam! Dam, that's it! The Hotel Dam.*"

† Henry Irving, on his first trip to America with Ellen Terry, opened his New York engagement at the Star Theatre with *The Bells*, October 29, 1883, and afterwards toured other cities. In Chicago, Ellen Terry's son, "Teddie" (Gordon Craig), then a lad, played *Joey*, a gardener's boy, in *Eugene Aram*.

his inventions at his workshop, in connection with the new electric light system which he was installing at the Lyceum Theatre. To this, and to a reading of MacKaye's new play, *Dakolar*, the following two letters refer:

(Nov. 24, '84): "My dear MacKaye:—I can attend the expedition to Mr. Edison's workshop on *Friday afternoon* and, of course, I should be glad to see his inventions. For the reading of your new play I would suggest next *Monday morning*, at 12, a cup of tea, and *no distractions*. . . . The subject is very serious. I am of opinion, *now*, that you would do wisely to open with the new version of *Masks and Faces*, getting William Warren for *Triplet*; playing *Pomander* yourself; with a couple of the most beautiful women you can find, for *Peg* and *Mabel*. . . . Faithfully yours, *William Winter*."

(Dec. 4, '84): "My dear MacKaye, In supping with Mr. Irving, I made a special point of an engagement for breakfast, to *go see Edison's shops with you and me*. He dwelt on your kindness in inviting him, how good of you it was, but said he was playing a different piece each night, had several day appointments, had to appear at the Actor's Fund performance, etc., and finds it impossible to join you; but he promises to do so when he returns in the spring, and *we shall hold him to this engagement*. . . . Winter says you have been reading a new play to him. Some time, read one to me. I'll promise faithfully to keep my eyelids unbuttoned to the end. Yours ever—*Horace Porter*."

"BY THE SKIN OF MY TEETH—AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR"

It had been hoped that the Lyceum Theatre would be ready for the public by January 1, '85, but many exigencies delayed the opening. Consequently the winter and early spring of 1885 were filled, for my father, with multiple labours, in the endeavour—while building up his school—to launch his new playhouse on full tide of the theatrical season. But already that tide was ebbing when at last he was able to open the theatre in April. The resulting strain of anxieties was very great. On January 17th he wrote from New York to my mother, at Mt. Vernon:

"My darling wife—I would go out to you to-night if I could, but I must meet some gentlemen to-night that I have been trying all the week to get here. *I have pulled through by the skin of my teeth this week—and at the eleventh hour*. I have no doubt we shall triumph, but there is still a hard fight ahead. I enclose a few dollars. God bless and keep you all!—Always, in deepest love, your own *James*."

RICHARD MANSFIELD ENGAGED FOR *DAKOLAR*: DELAYS AND RELEASE

Meantime, during the autumn of '84, he had formed a cordial friendship with a rising young actor, whose gifts were to create an

eminent reputation in after years. Richard Mansfield, who was then twenty-seven, had recently returned to America from England, with the manuscript of a new play, *The Laurel Wreath*, which he had collaborated with the English playwright, Fawcett Rowe. This play, with his own services as chief actor, Mansfield offered to the new Lyceum management; but, since MacKaye's new play was scheduled for the opening, my father countered his proposal by asking on what terms he would act the chief rôle in *Dakolar* (then still unnamed), to which Mansfield replied on October 30th:

"I will take \$200 a week to play part in the 'play' to be produced on or about Jany. 1st at the new Lyceum Theatre—I to continue in the cast as long as the play runs in New York. If I go on the road, my name to be starred; and I to receive a certainty and a share of the profits, or as may be hereafter mutually agreed."

These terms appear to have been immediately accepted, for on Sunday, Nov. 2nd, the New York Times announced:

"The putting on of Mr. Richard Mansfield's new play will be delayed by Mr. MacKaye until next autumn. Mr. Mansfield, however, will take part in the initial performance of Mr. MacKaye's new drama, when the Lyceum Theatre throws open its doors for the first time."

On account, however, of the delay in the Lyceum opening, and of Mansfield's desire to act in New York that season, the above arrangements were amicably terminated.*

SOCIAL GATHERINGS: MANSFIELD, WALLACK, WINTER, WATTERSON, ETC.

Several notes of this time from friends to my father indicate pleasant social gatherings, among professional leaders.

(From "Staten Island, March 27th, 1885"): "Dear MacKaye:—I have been ill, at my home here, for several days; else it would be pleasant to meet Colonel Watterson and take part in the *festivities*. I hope to call on him at an early day.—Truly yours—*William Winter*."

(From "134 W. 39th St., Wednesday"—undated): "My dear MacKaye, The dinner is for tomorrow—Thursday—at 6.30 and not for today. It is my mistake. I am so sorry you are ill. I do not know where to address Winter. Could you remind him that he dines here tomorrow?—Yours always—*Richard Mansfield*."

* The following note was dated, "Lyceum Theatre, Dec. 29th, 1884:—"My dear MacKaye. In reply to your favor of this date, I fully agree to the terms of mutual release from our contract relating to 'The Laurel Wreath' and my personal services.—Yours—*Richard Mansfield*."

(From "Wallack's, New York, Feb. 11, 1885"): "Mr. Lester Wallack presents his compliments to Mr. Steele MacKaye, and will be pleased to reserve a box for his personal use at the professional matinee, Friday next."

ORCHESTRA-CAR, ETC.; TIME EXCLUDES MANY INVENTIONS

In contrast to these "festivities," is the tenor of this note to Col. McKaye at Paris, from J. F. Harvey, secretary of the Lyceum:

"Mr. Steele MacKaye is extremely tired and *the constant strain of anxiety and work which he has to bear is something terrific*, if he can stand it until the opening. *He is rehearsing his principal actors in the daytime and his auxiliaries in the evening.* Mrs. MacKaye is here nearly every day, helping on the costumes. Often some of the boys come with her."

Under these limits of time, capital and overwork, only a few of the new inventions MacKaye had planned for his "dream theatre" could be included now in the Lyceum, as is indicated by this excerpt from the Post (March 23), in which his unprecedented care for the music is noteworthy:

"At his new theatre, Mr. MacKaye was found hard at work. 'Many of my schemes,' he said, 'cannot be carried out, simply because we have not time to attend to them. *It will take needful years for me to perfect, according to my ideas, the performances to be given in this house.* At present only a few features are absolutely new. . . . The orchestra car, as I call it, will enable me to place my musicians in view of the public ready to play. There will be no straggling in of musicians from under the stage, no tuning up. *I have had the orchestra of twenty-three men, picked musicians, drilling under Mr. Mollenhauer for three months.* . . . The men will be seated upon a strip the breadth of the stage, but only six feet wide; of course we produce an illusion of depth by scenic devices. The moment the overture is over, the curtains close and up goes my orchestra car, the bottom of it forming the under side of the proscenium arch. The front of the stage, ready set for the act, comes up from the cellar as the orchestra rises to the flies. It is all very simple and a great saving of space. . . . Another important novelty, a convenience to the public, will be the *six aisles* of the parquette, there being no more than four seats together. *Every seat in the parquette is either literally a seat on the aisle, or next to the aisle.*"

HENRY IRVING BANQUET; IRVING INSPECTS LYCEUM ON EVE OF OPENING

Bearing in mind the return of Henry Irving to New York in the spring, mentioned by Gen. Horace Porter in his letter to MacKaye (Dec. 4, '84 *), Porter headed a national committee, of which Steele

* On page i, 484.

MacKaye—with Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett, Charles A. Dana, William M. Evarts, Richard Watson Gilder, Whitelaw Reid, and Chauncey M. Depew—was a member of the New York City contingent. Other members, outside New York, included Oliver Wendell Holmes, Mark Twain, W. D. Howells, T. B. Aldrich, George M. Pullman, George W. Childs, Goldwin Smith, John Hay. This national committee tendered to Irving a public banquet at Delmonico's, on Monday, April 6th, 1885, in honour of his distinguished record as an actor and manager.

As the date of this banquet—Easter Monday—would thus conflict with the opening night of the Lyceum Theatre, which he had planned to attend, Henry Irving sent word to MacKaye—in response to my father's invitation to a Sunday private view of the theatre before its opening—that he would be keenly interested and glad to come, on Sunday, March 29th or April 5th, preferably the latter.* Accordingly—as five years earlier, the eve of the opening of MacKaye's Madison Square Theatre had been associated with the personal greeting of America's foremost actor, Edwin Booth—so now the eve of his Lyceum Theatre opening was linked with the personal presence of the foremost English actor, Henry Irving.

"PALMER AND MACKAYE FACE TO FACE": WHAT IF "ANOTHER
HAZEL KIRKE" BE BORN!

Easter Monday, 1885, was a day significant in the annals of New York theatrical management. On the Saturday before (April 4), *The Drama and Music* wrote:

"At the theatres henceforward there will be close competition between Mr. Steele MacKaye of the Lyceum and Mr. A. M. Palmer of the Madison Square. This singular and sudden antagonism is easily explained. Mr. Steele MacKaye was the real founder of the Madison Square. His energy brought that house into life; his ingenious mind gave an original purpose to it; his play *Hazel Kirke* kept it alive until it found a chance to keep itself alive. His invention, the double stage, had a great deal to do with its popularity. *When Mr. MacKaye went out of the Madison Square, he left his work behind him, and the value of that work cannot be underrated to-day.* . . . Now Mr. Palmer—astute, cautious and able—has succeeded the Messrs. Mallory,† and as he takes

* "Mr. Irving," Winter had written to MacKaye (March 17th), "speaks at Harvard University, Monday morning, March 30th, and *probably* he will have to leave for Boston on Sunday afternoon, March 29th; so the private view of the theatre, no doubt, could be better arranged for April 5th."

Early in April MacKaye had given a private view of the theatre to the press, who filled many columns describing its novel and beautiful appointments.

† The Mallorys, by other report, then still retained a 50 per cent financial interest in the Madison Square.

hold of the Madison Square, Mr. MacKaye takes hold of the ambitious Lyceum Theatre. *The two men stand face to face*, at the head of enterprises which are equally noteworthy and are certainly antagonistic. Managers Wallack and Daly may safely regard this opposition of forces from a far-away standpoint."

So, in the world of Broadway, MacKaye's longed-for "laboratory of art" was verily "buildded on a battle ground." So strenuous was the rivalry between his old theatre and his imminent one, that—at the eleventh hour—the Mallorys, sharpening their old weapons of legalism, prompted A. M. Palmer to attack MacKaye in the very heart of his new enterprise, and there almost succeeded in preventing the opening of MacKaye's play and theatre, by seeking to serve process-papers upon Robert B. Mantell, whom my father had engaged to act the title rôle in his play, *Dakolar*.

During the last days and nights of rehearsal, Mantell was literally embattled within the Lyceum Theatre building, while my father—in the midst of a thousand and one other duties—was himself understudying the part of *Dakolar*, lest the Madison Square management should succeed in enjoining Mantell. In a letter,* years afterward (March 8, 1921), Robert Mantell wrote to me concerning this managerial strategy:

"At that time, I was involved in a law suit with A. M. Palmer and the Mallory Brothers, because of my contract to play in *Called Back* at the Fifth Avenue. I beat them eventually in the suit, but it looked as though I would be restrained from going on for the opening of *Dakolar*. For two days and nights before the opening, I lived in the theatre, sleeping and taking my meals there, with sentinels all about the theatre, prepared to ward off the servers of legal papers. I shall never forget how solicitous your good father was to see that I was comfortable and had my meals properly served." †

"On such a night," my father's new venture was born. What were its chances of survival?

"The name of Steele MacKaye is a tall tower of strength," wrote The Spirit of the Times, "and there can be no doubt of the success of the Lyceum, if it be backed by sufficient capital. We should think that the Madison Square Theatre, founded by him, has paid about one thousand

* Quoted more fully on page 820.

† My mother writes of my father in her Recollections: "The night before the opening of *Dakolar* was the morning for us. I remember so well going back with him from the dress rehearsal to 45th Street (where we were stopping with 'Uncle' Frank Carpenter), as the shop people were taking down their front shutters."

per cent upon the capital originally invested, and, if the Lyceum should chance upon another *Hazel Kirke*, it will pay even better, with Mr. MacKaye to manage the central theatre and organise the travelling companies."

Thus strangely MacKaye's four bitter years of "midland wandering" and "Elba" exile were closing in the doubt of conflict; while the luring mirage of the "dream theatre," which had beckoned with varying shapes across the desert places, was at last transmuted to palpable form and substance—a lovely and expert instrument at the service of his dreams. For "the Way-Seeker" of our true story on his pilgrimage, would this fought-for goal prove but another briefly havening oasis, or would he find there, at last, that desirable New World of art, where he should be free "to take needful years to perfect" the ripening results of imagination and experience?

If his theatre should "be backed by sufficient capital," and "*if* it should chance upon another *Hazel Kirke!*"—age-old "*if's*" of commercial speculation! Must such perennial "*if's*" forever way-lay the progress of art, invention and idealism, in the path of the seeking artist toward his goal of social good?—On this lightning-storm eve of his third valiant theatre project in America's metropolis, that still-unanswered question of civilisation must have burned luridly in the sleepless mind of Steele MacKaye.

What would the debatable morrow bring forth?

END OF PART THIRD

INVENTIONS

I.—“DOUBLE STAGE”

II.—FOLDING THEATRE-CHAIR

NOTE.—Of Steele MacKaye's many inventions it is possible to include in this memoir only a very few visual examples. In the following pages are specifications of two, representative of his earlier work in the years dealt with in Volume One. At the end of Volume Two are included specifications of seven, partly representative of his inventions for his Spectatorium, during the last years of his life. A condensed list of his inventions is given in the front matter of Volume Two.

I.—“DOUBLE STAGE.”

IMPROVEMENT IN THEATRE APPLIANCES.

Specification forming part of Letters Patent No. 222,143, dated December 2, 1879; application filed September 9, 1879.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, STEELE MAC-KAYE, of New York, county of New York, State of New York, have invented a new and useful Improved Theatre Stage and Orchestra, which is fully set forth in the following specification and accompanying drawings, in which—

Figure 1 is a front view of my improved stage and orchestra; Fig. 2, a vertical section of the stages at line *x x* of Fig. 3; Fig. 3, a plan or top view of the same with the casing removed.

The object of my invention is to facilitate the speedy setting of the scenery of different acts of a stage play or opera, an economy of space in the auditorium of a theatre, and the concentration of light upon the stage with the least inconvenience to the audience.

These ends are accomplished by constructing *two movable stages*, one above the other, with appliances for lifting and depressing the same, *locating the orchestra above the proscenium* with the stage-lights hid beneath it, *casting the light from above within, instead of from below upon, the stage.*

A represents the stage proper; B B, the flare of the proscenium thereof; C, the lower movable stage; D, the upper movable stage; E E E E, the guide-posts; H, movable stage-frame; I I, the suspension-ropes; J J, the pulleys therefor; K K, the balance-weights; L, the hoisting-rope; M, its pulley; N, the drum; O, the ratchet and pawl; P, the orchestra; R, the stage-lights; S, the automatic latch; T, its rod; U, the spring thereon; V, the floor of the auditorium.

The operation of these contrivances and arrangements is this: Supposing lower movable stage, C, to be secured on a level with stage A, the scenes, furniture, and properties of

the first and second scenes or acts of a play may be set on movable stages C and D. After the presentation of the first of these, automatic latch S is withdrawn by rod T and the pawl of ratchet O on drum N released, and both stages C and D lowered by rope L, passing over pulley M and drum N.

The second scene or act may then be given immediately from movable stage D, and while it is in progress the third scene or act will be struck and changed on stage C.

Upon the completion of the second act or scene, stages C and D are raised by the action of the apparatus before described, bringing stage C, with the third act or scene set thereon, upon the level of stage A, ready to be presented to the audience.

While the third scene is being acted upon stage C the fourth scene is being struck and changed on stage D, ready for presentation in its turn on the conclusion of the performance of scene three, and this process is continued until all the scenes and acts of the play have been performed.

The latches S S are automatic in their action in catching under a rafter of the stage-frame, spring U returning them into their places as soon as the beveled-edge rafter, which in rising pushed them aside, has passed the projection which constitutes the latch.

The extension of the rafters of the stage-frame within the guide-posts causes them to serve also as guides to steady the stages in their rise and descent between the posts.

These compound stages may be divided and separately moved, instead of together, as herein explained, without departing from the leading idea and principle of my invention, which is *the organizing of double stages capable of being separately operated upon at the same time for successive presentation.*

S. MACKAYE.
Theater Appliance.

No. 222,143.

Patented Dec. 2, 1879.

Fig. 1.

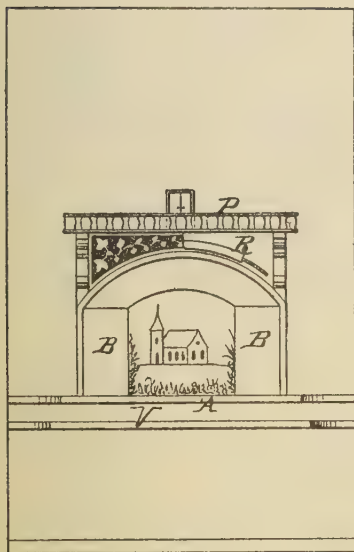


Fig. 2.

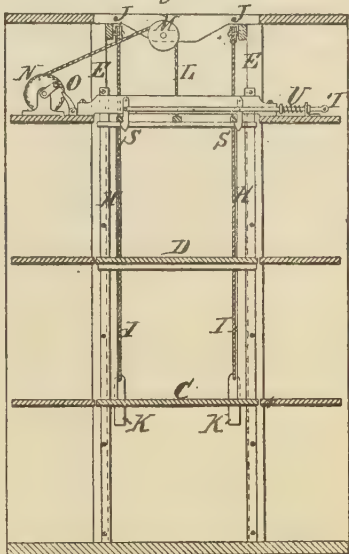
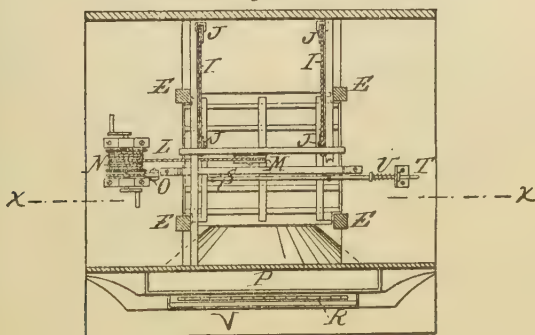


Fig. 3.



Witnesses
John M. Byles
Boyd Elliot

Inventor.
Steele Mackaye
by L. J. Gordon
his Atty.

It will be seen that by this contrivance the time formerly lost between the acts in setting the scene for the succeeding act will be saved, and the audience spared the long and fatiguing waits that often intervene between the acts of elaborately-mounted plays at modern theatres.

The location of orchestra P above the stage, with concealed lights R beneath it reflecting inwardly directly upon the stage, accomplishes two desirable ends: *The space ordinarily given up to the orchestra in the auditorium is saved for the audience, and the stage-lights, which, however carefully screened, are necessarily an annoyance and an injury to the eyes of many spectators, especially to those occupying places in*

the boxes and upper tiers, are removed to a position where their entire force can be concentrated directly upon the stage, the rays in all other directions being cut off.

What I claim as my invention, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

The combination of stage proper, A, movable stages C and D, connecting-frame H, and guide-posts E E E, provided with a hoisting, securing, and balancing apparatus, constructed and adapted to operate together substantially as and for the purposes set forth.

STEELE MACKAYE.

Witnesses:

S. J. GORDON,
JOHN W. RIPLEY.

II.—FOLDING CHAIR.

SPECIFICATION FORMING PART OF LETTERS PATENT NO. 295,261, DATED
MARCH 18, 1884.

Application filed May 10, 1882. (No model.)
(Patent granted Sept. 26, 1883.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, JAMES STEELE MACKAYE, of New York, county of New York, State of New York, have invented a new and useful Improvement in Folding Chairs, which is fully set forth in the following specification and accompanying drawings, in which—

Figure 1 is a top or plan view of my improved folding chair; Fig. 2, a side view of the same; Fig. 3, a front view of the same with the seat raised; Fig. 4, an end view of the same with the seat swung round to show passage-way; Fig. 5, an end view of chair folded up; Fig. 6, a side view of the same; Fig. 7, a section of the line $\alpha \alpha$ of Fig. 1; Fig. 8, a portion of the seat broken away to better show the folding mechanism;

Fig. 9, a detached view of the separator.

The object of my invention is to provide a chair for places of public meeting which shall *secure greater comfort and safety to the audience in entering and leaving the house.* I accomplish this by so constructing the chair and its supports as to provide *broad aisles in all directions* when the chairs are folded, and at the same time furnish a seat as comfortable and secure as ordinary chairs.

To this end my invention consists, primarily, of a folding-seat chair hinged at one of its rear corners, or thereabouts, so that two chairs may be placed side by side, hinged at their adjacent rear corners, preferably on a single standard.

J. S. MACKAYE.

FOLDING CHAIR.

No. 295,261.

Patented Mar. 18, 1884.

Fig. 1.

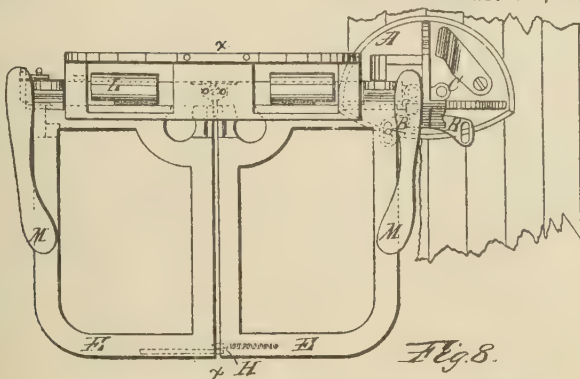


Fig. 8.

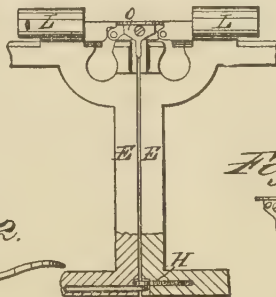


Fig. 7.

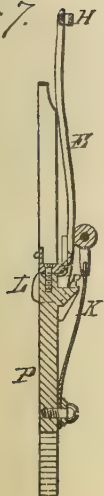


Fig. 2.

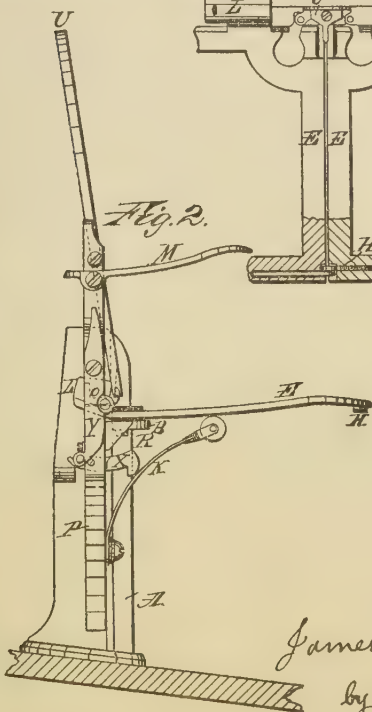


Fig. 9.



WITNESSES:

John M. Ripley
O. Wether

INVENTOR

James Steele Mackaye

by P. F. Gordon his Atty.

My improved chair, illustrated in the annexed drawings, and exemplifying one form of my invention, exhibits a capacity to fold three times: first, the automatic rise of the seat; second, a lateral swing of the chair on its support; third, a folding up of the seat and back upon themselves.

In the drawings, A represents the standard or support; B B, the supporting-catches; C, the supporting-hinge; D, the securing-catch; E, the seat; F, the seat-supporting rod; G, the spiral spring thereon; H, the folding-hinge; I, the catch-pin; J, its socket; K, the seat-lifting spring; L L, the counter-weights; M M, the inwardly-curved arms; N, the stop thereof; O, the seat-separator and back-stop; P, the supporting-bracket which constitutes the chair-frame; R R, the seat-stops thereon; T T, the bracket-folding hinges; U, the back; V V, the folding-hinges; W W, the back-sustaining pivots; X, the chair-latch; Y, its lever; Z, the lever spring.

The standard A is a post-like standard, which occupies but a fraction of the depth of the seat, so that when the seats of a row of my chairs are turned up, a broad aisle is formed, practically unobstructed by the standards in front of such row; and when the chairs, with seats folded, are swung back a quarter-turn on their standards, broad aisles are formed across the rows of chairs. I term my standards "post-like standards," as distinguished from frame-like standards or boards practically as wide or wider than the depth of the seat, the use of which frame-like standards renders it impossible to obtain broad unobstructed aisles both in front of and across rows of chairs without increasing the space between such rows.

The above parts operate together to promote the objects hereinbefore set forth, as follows: Supposing the chair just vacated, spring K lifts duplex seat E and carries both its sections up against back U. As seat E rises, its outer edges strike inwardly-curved arms M M and bring them into a position parallel with back U. The entire chair is now free to swing on bracket-supporting hinge C on standard A, thereby open-

ing an unobstructed floor-space in one direction equal to the width of the chair. The unconfined half of seat E may now be folded inwardly upon the other half by reason of folding-hinge H, made free for that purpose, one of its arms resting in a recess of the unconfined half of the seat, and also by reason of the action of separator O, which pushes the two halves of seat E asunder. At the same time that this is done, back U may be folded inwardly upon itself by means of folding hinges V V, and bracket P will also similarly fold upon its hinges T T. The roller at the upper extremity of spring K will pass within the curved sockets left in the lower innermost corners of each half of seat E to receive it, and as the two halves come together latch X falls within catch D, and the chair is thereby fastened securely to standard A. An open floor-space equal to half the width of the chair is thus obtained at right angles to the before-mentioned aisle. The arm corresponding to the outer or unconfined half of seat E bears at its inner end against lever Y, pivoted to bracket P. Drawing this arm outwardly, lever Y, bearing upon the outer end of latch X, also pivoted to bracket P, releases latch X from catch D, and the chair is free to be unfolded at pleasure, spring Z returning lever Y to its place. As seat E falls into position, catch-pin I drops into recessed catch B on standard A, thereby locking seat E securely to standard A. The seat is supported by stops R R and rods F F. Spiral springs G G on rods F F hold the two halves of seat E together, and counter-weights L L, while aiding to lift seat E, also bring forward the lower end of back U, producing comfortable inclination. When the chair is folded, catch-pin I is received within socket J, and folding-hinge H within a similar socket in back U.

It will be observed that arms M M are of peculiar formation, inclining inwardly over seat E, thereby increasing both the comfort and safety of the chair by providing a larger bearing-surface for the arm to rest upon, and widening the space between the arms of adjoining chairs,

J. S. MACKAYE.

FOLDING CHAIR.

No. 295,261.

Patented Mar. 18, 1884.

Fig. 3.

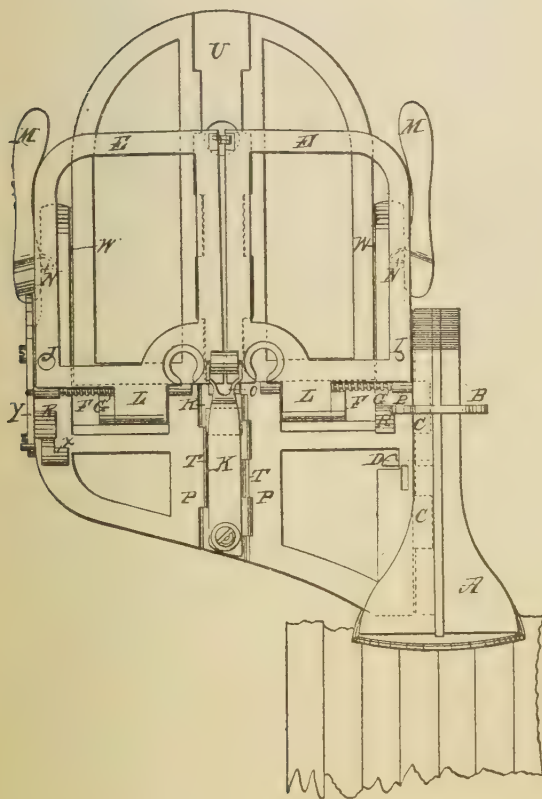
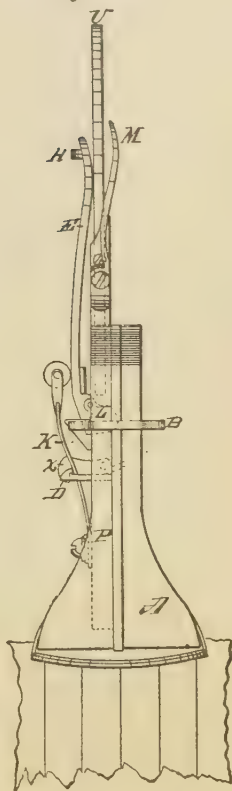


Fig. 4.



WITNESSES:

John W. Ripley
O'Mather

INVENTOR

James Steele Mackaye
by L. J. Gordon his Atty.

so that the arm of one, when falling, will be less likely to strike the hand of the occupant of the adjoining chair if resting upon the arm thereof. Separator O also serves as a stop to back U and determines the inclination thereof. By these means spacious aisles are instantly obtainable in all directions for the exit of an audience.

The leading feature of my invention consists in hinging two chairs at their adjacent rear corners to a post-like standard, the chairs being constructed with a seat adapted to fold up against the back. This feature may be used independently; but I prefer to use in all cases an automatically-folding seat. An obvious modification would be to use two chairs, each hung at one of its rear corners to a separate standard, one chair being hung at the right-hand corner, the other at the left-hand corner, and then placing the standards close together. Thus my invention is not limited to a chair which contains, in addition, the feature of a chair-frame, seat, and back, each constructed in two sections adapted to be folded upon each other, and with other features described and claimed.

I desire it to be understood that in some of the ensuing claims I do not limit myself to a chair having a self-folding seat, or a seat composed of two sections, or a back composed of two sections, or a chair constructed with folding arms. These features of construction may be omitted in some cases. The details of construction may also be greatly varied without departing from the principle of my invention.

What I claim as my invention, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

1. The combination, substantially as before set forth, of a single post-like standard, substantially such as described, a pair of chair-frames, both hinged at their adjacent rear corners by vertical hinges to said standard, and a folding seat for each chair-frame.

2. The combination, substantially as before set forth, of the post-like standard, substantially such as described, the chair-frame, hinged at one of its rear corners by a vertical hinge to said standard, the pivoted

seat, and a spring for automatically folding the seat.

3. A chair-standard constructed substantially as described, provided with double hinge-sockets, double seat-supporting catches B B, and double chair-fastening catches D D, whereby two chairs may be supported by, folded upon, and secured to a single standard.

4. In a folding chair, bracket P, made in three parts, with hinges, admitting the folding of one section thereof upon another, and forming a support for the back and seat of the chair, substantially as described.

5. The duplex seat E, provided with free hinge H, counter-weights L L, catch-pin I, socket J, spring K, supporting-rods F F, closing-springs and separator O, operating together substantially as described.

6. The combination, substantially as before set forth, of the self-folding seat and the pivoted arms, the outer ends of which are curved inward and also reach over the edges of the seat, whereby the folding of the seat causes the folding of the arms.

7. The combination of arm M on the outer section of the back, lever Y, and latch X, pivoted to such section, and catch D on the standard, all operating together substantially as set forth.

8. The combination, substantially as before set forth, of the swinging back U, provided with hinges V V, and supporting-bolts W W, and the folding seat constructed with rearward projections or weights, whereby the back is automatically inclined on turning the seat down.

9. In a folding chair, seat-separator and back-supporter O on the bracket P, constructed and operating substantially as described.

10. The combination of a standard, two supporting bars or frames pivoted vertically and independently thereto, and two folding chairs hinged to said supporting bars or frames, substantially as described, whereby said chairs may, when folded, be turned back to back and leave a passage-way between adjacent rows of double seats.

JAMES STEELE MACKAYE.

Witnesses:

S. J. GORDON,
J. W. RIPLEY.

Fig. 5.

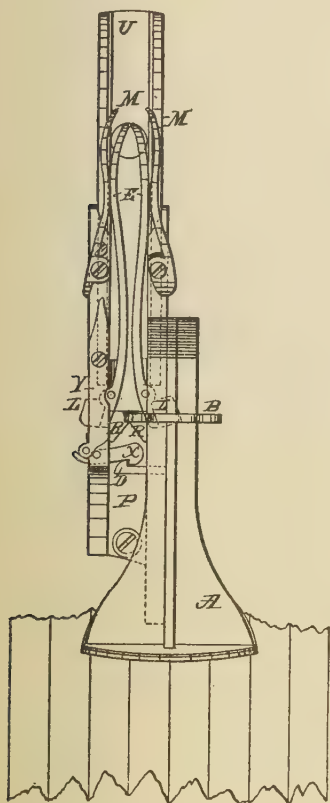
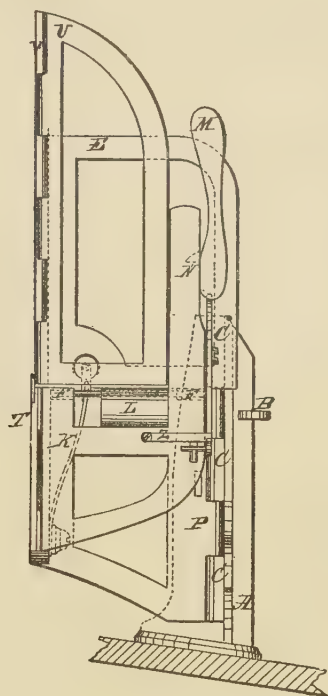


Fig. 6.



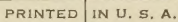
WITNESSES:

John M. Ripley
O. Mather


INVENTOR

James Steele Mackaye
by P. J. Gordon his Atty

Date Due

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